





*John Widdowes
ex Dono. D. Cath. Col. l.*

A 1485 m. 39

Practical Discourse

CONCERNING

The REDEEMING

O F

T I M E.

B Y

*Edward Pelling, D. D. Chaplain in
Ordinary to her Majesty, and
Rector of Perworth in Sussex.*

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Practical

CONCERNING

THE

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TIME



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Practical Discourse

Concerning the

Redeeming of TIME.

CHAPTER I.

What is meant by the Redeeming of Time, and the reasons for it.

ST. Paul in two several places directs us to Redeem Time, Ephes. 5. 16. and Col. 4. 5.

And that I may not by any needless Preface, spend that which he

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he thought so Precious as to be
worth all our endeavours to Re-
deem, I shall immediately pitch up-
on the consideration of the matter,
and inquire into three necessary
things.

First, What is meant by Redeem-
ing of Time.

Secondly, How very Reasonable
our Duty is as to this particular.

Thirdly, How we may order the
matter so, as to Redeem our Time
to good purpose.

First then ; Some look upon this
Phrase, *The Redeeming of Time*, as
a Proverbial Expression ; and un-
derstand by it, the using all Pru-
dent and Honest ways to avoid pre-
sent Danger ; by putting Danger
off by Delays, and by *Gaining of*
Time, as we are wont to speak.
And

Redeeming of Time.

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And in this sense the *Greek Translation* of the *Bible* uses the Phrase, *Dan. 2. 8.* And *Seneca* hath an Expression very like it to the same purpose (*Epist. 13.*)

But supposing this to be the immediate Scripture-sense of the Phrase, it is not inconsistent to understand it in the more Literal Construction, and as it commonly sounds in *English*, for the Application of all possible Endeavours to make the best use of our Time we can. This Sense is proper; and considering how necessary the Practice of the thing is, I shall take the liberty to Discourse of it according to the usual importance of the Words, with due Submission to the Judgment of some Learned Interpreters.

To *Redeem*, is to recover that which was once Lost, and when we apply it to *Time*, it signifies the

A 4.

Re-

A practical Discourse of
 Recovering of those Hours, which
 have been *misspent* and *thrown away*;
 by Labouring hard for the future,
 to employ every Minute we have
 to good purpose, *Time* is always
 in the *Flux*; nor can we have any
 present possession, but of a Mo-
 ment. God gives us our Time,
 Minute by Minute; that we may
 be the better Husbands of it, es-
 pecially considering that on every
 Moment an Eternity of Happiness
 or Misery doth depend; nor is it
 possible for us to recover Yesterday,
 so as to make that to be present a-
 gain, which is actually elapsed. The
 nature of thing will not allow it:
 and yet 'tis possible to do it a *Moral*
 way, by making all the *Compensation*
 on we can for what is gone, by the
 inticement of our Zeal, and by the
multiplication of our good *Actions*;
 by adding in weight that which is
 wanting as to the number of our
 days; by rendering our selves dou-
 bly

Redeeming of Time. 9

bly beneficial; as if we made one day, two, by improving the Present in Proportion suitable and tantamount to what is gone. This is in Gods Account, a Revocation of our time; a *Redemption of it*; so as to make it our own again, by laying out an equivalent proportion of Industry and Labour, in lieu of those Hours which have been either squandred away, or not half so well employed, as they ought and might have been.

And this I take to be the ground of that Rule, by which our Saviour tells us, he will proceed, *The First shall be last and the Last First; or the First shall be as the Last, and the Last as the First*; Meaning, that tho' God is pleased to call some to the Knowledge of the Gospel much earlier than he doth others; yet many of those who embrace the Faith later than the rest, shall receive an equal Reward with such

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as profess'd it sooner. The reason is, because ^{they} made up their time by their extraordinary diligence; they that got into the *Vine-yard at the last Call*, may by the earnestness and vigour of their Performances, deserve as well, and do as much Work in a little time, as those who have *born the Heat and Burden of the Day*, and yet did not work *so* ~~so~~ hard, tho' they went in at the *First Call*. Hence Christ said, *Many are called, but few chosen*; that is, tho' many Profess the Truth, yet few in comparison, make such vast improvements of their time, as, by their extraordinary Labours do render themselves Eminent and choice Servants of God. That extraordinary Labourer, and most Zealous Apostle (St. Paul, I mean) *was one of those few*. He said indeed, *That he was the Least of the Apostles, and less than the least of all the Saints, and that he was as one born out of due time,*

Redeeming of Time. 11

time, 1 Cor. 15. 8. But, though to shew his great *Humility* and *Repentance* for his Sins, he spake so disdainfully of himself, as if he were like an *Abortive*, that wanted those perfect *Proportions* which a Child hath, that stayeth the full Course of Nature ; yet he filled up his time by his *unparall'd Zeal and Vigour* ; nor doth all the *Scripture*, I think, give us such another Instance, as he was, to shew what is to *Redeem the Time* : *I Laboured*, (said he) *more abundantly than they All*, 1 Cor. 15. 10. These were not Vain, Boasting Expressions, but a just acknowledgment of what he found himself obliged to do to make God and Man all possible Reparation. He would not lose an Hour more ; but strove to expiate his Guilt for coming so late into the Church, and for wasting it so before his Entrance.

By

By this great Example of himself, which the penitent Apostle sets to his own Advice, we may easily perceive, what it is to Redeem the Time. He was ready to be at any cost, to retrieve (what he could) those fair Opportunities of doing the World and himself good, which upon his melancholy Reflections, he saw were dropt out of his hands. Labour, Sufferings, Life it self; All he thought little enough to make amends. So that to Redeem our time in St. Pauls way is, with all possible Application and Earnestness of Mind to make the best use we can of the Present, to increase our diligence every new day; as to employ the Remainder of our Life with such Care and Husbandry, as if we were within a short space to die, and to go to Judgment.

And

And if People would but seriously consider, how valuable time is, and what the consequences will most certainly be, whether they improve, or throw it away, one would think no other Motive would be needful, to make them Husband it well; but this single thought; that whatever they do, they are still dealing for an Eternity. It is the only business we have in this World, to be evermore regular and constant in the course God hath set us, as the Sun is in his Motions. From the Womb to the Grave we have our days numbered out unto us; or however we spend them, whether well, or ill we may be sure it will turn to some account; there is no Medium, or Remedy, but we must be infinitely Gainers or Losers by it; this is evident to all who believe a future state.

How.

However, that notions of this kind, may make the deeper impression, 'twill be requisite in the prosecution of this subject to consider these three things.

First, How very prejudicial to the Soul we find the loss of time to be already.

Secondly, How irreparable the loss will be in another Life.

And *Thirdly*, how dangerous it is in relation even to our present outward Fortunes. These few things, if gravely and wisely consider'd, would naturally excite Men to Redeem their time, while it is yet in their Power, and while the Price of Redemption is yet in their Hand.

C H A P.

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C H A P. II.

*How very prejudicial to the Soul
Men may find the loss of
Time to be already.*

First, **H**OW very prejudicial to the Soul we find the loss of *Time* to be already. The Perfections of the Soul, whether they be *Intellectual* or *Moral*, are not wrought by any sudden instantaneous Infusion, but are acquir'd by degrees; *Knowledge* by Speculation and hard Studies; *Virtue* by Practice; by many repeated Acts, which improve good Dispositions into a settled habit of *Living well*; now this requires *Time*, and therefore the Scripture expresses it, by growing in Grace, 2 Pet. 3. 18. because

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cause those gracious Dispositions rise and increase *gradually*. Though the *Principle* be *supernatural*, yet 'tis *Industry* and *Time* that bringeth *Fruit unto Perfection*. A *Mushroom* may be the work of a Night only, but substantial *Virtue* and *Piety*, being Acts of a Man's Will, governed by Arguments from *Reason* and *Revelation*, must needs be of slow growth; especially so as become customary and habitual. Upon this account the loss of *Time* is very sensibly prejudicial to Peoples *Souls*, because thereby the business of their *Salvation* (in the Works whereof they should have kept equal Paces with their *Time*, that great and urgent Business, is put quite backward, and left behind hand, never to be fetch'd up again with *double Diligence* at the least. Their Understandings are darkned or deluded, for want of that true Information, which their Minds might

might have received, had they not
 slept or sported away many happy
 Opportunities, & on spent them upon
 secular Concernments. Their Sense
 of Religion is comparatively very
 superficial, by their neglecting those
 Hours which should have been em-
 ployed about it. Their Virtues are
 inconsiderable for want of Practice.
 Briefly, & all those Improvements
 which others have made, and which
 are necessary for all, to prepare and
 fit their Souls for a blessed State here-
 after, such careless People are to
 seek for, and perhaps at last despair
 of making, when once they are
 thoroughly sensible of their Neg-
 lects, and find the Inconveniencies
 of a sick Bed, or the dulness of old
 Age to come upon them. Instead
 of those Perfections in Grace and
 Goodness, Vice gets ground apace,
 every day but grows more and
 more habitual, till in the end it
 is as hard a matter to reform
 those

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those who are accustomed to do Evil, as it is to make an *Ethiopian* change his Skin, or a Leopard his Spots, *Jer.* 13. 23. We should therefore *Redeem the Time*, while possibility and practicableness of the thing gives us Encouragements. We commonly look back upon our Losses with a sadness, and with many disquieting *Thoughts*: God knoweth, 'tis too often thus in our ordinary Affairs, though it be natural enough, 'tis the ready way to create pain in the Heart of any unprosperous Man to consider, not only what Fortunes he hath actually lost, but what *Advantages* he has *miss'd* too; what he might have come to, had he been diligent and wise; what he might have *done*; what he might have *been*; how many ways he might have improv'd his Interest, had his Hands been Industrious, and had he not let so many Opportunities slip out

out of them. If any thing can stir up such an improvident and restiff Creature, by vigorous course to *Redeem* the *Time* that is gone from him, the Sense of this must be. And if Men were as heartily concern'd for *Spiritual*, as they are for these external transitory Matters, they would hardly need any other persuasions to *Redeem their Time*, but this single Consideration, *What Debtors they are to their own Souls; and what great Arrears they are in unto themselves.* Since they came into the World capable of any Impressions, and lived out the Days of their Child hood in a State of perfect Innocence, (comparatively) What Proficients in *Religion* and *Virtue* might they have been, by that time they came of Age, had they not dropt their *precious Time* with their Trifles and Toys? And since they had the same equal Advantage with *Timothy*, of knowing
the

the *Holy Scriptures* from their Childhood, they might have been wise unto *Salvation* betimes too, had they spent their days in chewing over, and digesting those wholesome Doctrines, wherein *Timothy* was careful to be nourished up, 1 *Tim.* 4. 6. Many Vices might have been destroyed upon their first appearance, like *Cockatrices* crush'd in the Egg. *Passion* would have met with an early check. *Meekness*, *Patience*, *Humility*, *Charity*, and a devout Temper, would not have been scorn'd, as *Phlegmatick* and ungenerous Dispositions. *Conscience*, which is now prostituted to *Lust*, would have been preserv'd in a pure and undefiled State. Vast Improvements might have been made, had People but made a good use of their Time.

The only way therefore they have now to Redeem it, is to recover

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cover of their Losses as much as they can; and that with all possible speed; because the longer this Care is deferred, the greater still their Losses are; like Debts, which every day swell by being neglected. Wicked Habits grow daily, and are more and more confirmed by Pleasure and Custom, till the Ear becomes deaf, and the Heart hardened. There is a Succession of Follies, as there is of Years. When the Rattle is thrown away, *Vanity* is taken up; and *Vice* takes the next turn. Thus the *Youth* commenceth a Son of *Belial*; and proceeds by degrees from the Womb towards Hell; unless some surprizing Judgments meet him in the way, to give him a stop, after many Prayers and Councils of *Friends* that have been used in vain. By this course of Life, *Vice* is reckoned in the end one of the Accomplishments of a Man; and when once it comes
to

to be grave, to act with Seriousness, Deliberation, and Designs, it is infinitely harder to be conquered, then it was in the days of innocent Ignorance; consequently the hurt and mischief which is done to the poor Soul by a long Trade of Wickedness, is inexpressible; and therefore Men should Redeem their *Time* while they have it to Redeem, and while the thing is practicable; for the longer it runs, the more it will be out of their Power; their *Time* is still less and less, yet their Vices increase and wax the stronger; and their Minds are every day the more stiff and inflexible; So that when old Age comes, there is a crookedness within, which is far worse then that in the Bones; and 'tis to be fear'd, that a Death bed Repentance is seldom genuine and sincere, after a long Life of *Impiety*.

Some-

Sometimes it happens, that instead of Repenting, People are ready to despair; believing that after so much Time quite mis-spent, the poor remainder is too little, and too late for the beginning of a great Work, when ones course is now finishing. The thought of this is like an heavy Misfortune, which a Man knows not how to bear up against. His Heart sinks under the pressure, and he gives over all Endeavours; because he thinks no Labour or Means will be to purpose, especially when *Attempts* have been altogether ineffectual and fruitless. This is a sad consequence of the loss of *Time*, when it thus terminates in Horror and Dampness. And yet, though the thing be evil, the case is not uncommon; and considering the Danger that is so visible before all negligent People, one would think the very fear of what may

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may be, should stir them up to make provision against *Future*, by well husbanding the *Present*. We may be sure, the Remembrance of so much *Time Lost*, must needs be very uncomfortable in that day, when *Mens* Consciences are wont to speak home and plain. Suppose ones Heart be truly Penitent, it cannot but afford him a very melancholy Prospect, to look back upon his former Life, and to see what a long Course he has run to such purpose: How many fair Opportunities of doing good have been baulk'd? how little Religion hath been mind-
 led (tho' it be the great thing for which we were all brought into the World;) How many Motions of Gods *Holy Spirit* have been resisted; How many *Mercies* have been abused; How often private Affairs have been preferred to the *Divine Service*; How many hours have been trifled away, which should have been im-
 ploy'd

ployed at Gods House ; How many Sins have been acted , when the Works of *Salvation* should , and might have been look'd after ; in short , how Vice and Vanity , and Idleness have divided that Time , which God had a right to , and which the Soul might have farred happily by , had it not been in a wicked Mans keeping. Intemperance, Lust, Pride, Quarrelling, studying how to defraud, and to do Mischief, robbeth away a great part of some Mens Lives ; and worldly Interest is the common Thief, till improvident, Wretches see their Graves ready to open, to receive at last so many publick Nufances, and so many Burdens upon Earth. These must needs be very melancholy Considerations to those, whose Eyes Death is a closing ; especially if their Consciences are yet awake. And therefore People should be wise in time, because it is impossible for any

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of us to know, what the issues of a
Deathbed will be, or what our Con-
dition will prove then. The *Time*
past of our Life may suffice us to have
wrought the Will of the Gentiles, saith
St. Peter, 1 Pet. 4. 3. And thus
every one of us should conclude,
the time past of our Life may suffice
us, to have followed the Works of
the Flesh, and the Vanities of the
World, God knows, there are few,
who have not lost *too much* of this
kind already; and, if instead of *Re-*
covering, Men go on still to multi-
ply their Losses, 'twill be a sad Ac-
count they must come to at last,
when they shall cast up their Dam-
ages, and their Acquests, and
shall be made to consider what a
long Season they have fool'd away,
and gotten nothing by it in the end,
but a wounded Conscience, and a
most terrible Prospect.

C H A P. in a

C H A P. III.

*How irreparable this Loss will
be in another Life.*

THOUGH this alone be a great Consideration, yet in comparison of what follows, it is little to be valued. For whatever our Losses are now, as long as we have some time yet left us, we may make ourselves some sort of Reparation. But a Time is coming, which we should always provide against, (the great cause of our trifling away so many precious hours, is, because we do not think so much, and so often as we should of that Time) when, notwithstanding the intimate Affection, that is between them, the Soul must be divorced from the Body, and live in a separate State, till the general

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Judgment-day. *The Dust shall re-
turn to the Earth as it was; and the
Spirit shall return to God, who gave it.*
Eccles. 27. 7. It shall return unto
God to receive its Sentence for the
Works done in the Body; and ac-
cording as those Works have been,
whether good or evil, so will its State
be assigned it' either of Happiness or
Misery. And whatever that State
be, it will be utterly *unchangeable*.
There can be no Reviving, till the
Resurrection; no returning upon
the Earth any more; no living our
Lives over again, to rectifie any one
Miscarriage; no recalling a Minute,
to drop a Tear, or to cry for Pardon.
*There is (saith Job) some hope of a
Tree, if it be cut down, that it will
sprout again, and that the tender branch
thereof will not cease though the root
thereof wax old in the Earth, and
the Stock thereof dye in the Ground;
yet through the scent of Water it will
bud, and bring forth boughs like a Plant.*

But

Redeeming of Time. 29

But a Man dieth, and wasteth away; yea, Man giveth up the Ghost, and where is he? As the Waters fail from the Sea, and the Flood decayeth and dryeth up, so Man lieth down, and riseth not, till the Heavens be no more; They shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep, Job 14. This Consideration then is the *second Motive* to quicken us all to *Reedeem our Time*, because the loss of it at the end of this Life will be irreparable, seeing it is impossible for us to come out of our Graves again to order *Time* better then we are suppos'd to have done: We are deeply concerned to double our Diligence about it now, before it is past *Redemption*. As yet it is not too late; but it will certainly be so, when once we are dead: Our Works will follow us into another World; but it would be madness to think we may begin them there. Which way soever our Souls go, we must necessarily be Losers, by losing our *Time* here

Our Saviour tells us of a *broad way that leadeth to Destruction*, Mat. 7. 13. And such as go that way, are beyond all possibility of *Redeeming their Time*, or of being *Redeemed* themselves, when once they arrive at the end of their sad Journey. *Hell* indeed was prepared for the *Punishment* of the *Devil* and his *Angels*; and revealed to Men for their *Terror*; that the sight of it might turn their *Desires* towards *Heaven*, and frighten them into an eagerness of taking *Sanctuary* there, where *Promises* alone would hardly allure sordid and brutish *Appetites*. But if after such proffers of infinite Happiness, some will be so improvident and head-strong, as to make that their *Option*, which is the *Devils Curse*, they can blame none but themselves for being at last without hope of *Recovery*. *There the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched*, as our Saviour assures us
thrice

Redeeming of Time.

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thrice together, *Mar.* 9. 44, 46, 48. Elsewhere it is called, *Fire unquenchable*, *Mat.* 3. 12. *Fire Everlasting*, *Mat.* 25. 41. *Fire Eternal*, *Jude* 7. which is enough to prove the interminable duration of Hell-Torments, against those hardy Wretches, who would fain dispute them away, instead of endeavouring to prevent them. This is to study how to throw away two things which hang heavy upon them, their *Time* and their *Faith* too; though the loss of either will be enough to make them miserable. Perhaps the loss of *Time* is the greatest, because it goes first; Infidelity and other Wickedness being the Results of the loss of *Time*, or that which is the consequent of hours mis-employed. There are some Creatures which believe and tremble; and those Sons of Perdition, who bear them Company in weeping and wailing, and gnashing of Teeth, would give all the World,
if

if they had it at command, *for a few* of those days, which many are so weary of, that they think of *Methods*, how to drive away their *Time*: some by Idleness; some by Pride; some by Quarrelling; some by Lust; some by Intemperance; most by Vanity. Those Portions of *Time*, how large soever they be, which Living-men so little regard, those forlorn Souls, which have abandoned themselves to damnation, by not fore-casting what now they feel, would think little enough to bestow upon Fasting, and Prayers, and Acts of Charity; upon Expressions of Humility, and Self-denial; upon the severest Mortifications; upon Sufferings of any sorts (excepting their suffering the loss of *Time*) they would be glad, though but of a few *Minutes*, instead of our *Years*, to try if there might be any the least room for *Repentance*. The Soul doth not forfeit its Essential Faculties, by being parted

ted from the Flesh. It retaineth still Understanding, Memory, Will, and Affections; such I mean, as are suitable to its State. Hope then can be none, when once it is come to the final Possession of its Fortunes. And yet, thus much may be gathered from the Parabolical Account, our Saviour gave of *Abraham*, and the rich Man, *Luk. 16*, That though the State of the Blessed, and the State of the Damned be immutably fixt on each hand by a *Chasm*, or the irrevocable Decree of God, so that the damned have not any *Hope* for *Themselves*; yet they have so much *Charity*, even in *Hell*, as to wish that their surviving Friends may not come into a Place, where they themselves endure such exquisite Torments. And what would not such Souls do on their own behalf, might they have some fresh time given them to bestow upon *Moses*, and the *Prophets*? To be sure they would

part with all their *Torments* for one single day ; and yet year after year is now wasted, I do not say, in unprofitable, but in ungodly and wicked Courses. What Nature doth not require, to supply its wants, *Vice* appropriates a great share of ; though the *World* commonly goes away with the greatest part ; and that very small Portion, which is left for Offices of Religion, is spent often after such a superficial and careless manner, that that too may be reckoned among Mens idle Expences, when a Messenger of Satan comes to deprive them of all, and to shut them under an utter impossibility of ever returning back to Redeem an Hour.

Again, the Son of God tells us of a *strait Gate*, and a *narrow way*, which leadeth unto *Life*, Mat. 7. 14. Now tho in that blessed State every faithful Christian will be crowned for all his Labours and Travels, and Sufferings

ings under the Sun; yet in Heaven it self he will find some detriment by not Redeeming his *Time* here with that Diligence and Vigor which he should have used. To speak in St. Paul's Words, though he spake them in reference to Trials and Persecutions in this Life, 1 Cor. 3. 15. *Such a Man shall suffer loss, but he shall be saved.* For, as there are Degrees of Torments in Hell, some beaten with fewer, and some with many Stripes, as they have squandered away their Time here less or more; so there are degrees of Felicities in Heaven, as Men have employed their Opportunities in this World, well, or *better*. This inequality of Happiness our Saviour sufficiently intimates, *by the many Mansions, which he saith are in his Fathers House*, Jo. 14. 2. The Words in the Prophet Daniel are exprefs; *They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the Firmament; and they that*

turn

turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever, Dan. 12. 3. The Words of St. Paul are to the like purpose; *There is one Glory of the Sun, another Glory of the Moon, and another of the Stars; for one Star differeth from another Star in Glory: So also is the Resurrection of the Dead,* 1 Cor. 15. 41, 42. The Apostles words elsewhere are beyond exception, *He which soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap bountifully,* 2 Cor. 9. 6. *Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own Labour,* 1 Cor. 3. 8. From which places of Scripture it is clear, that tho' all Rewards at the hand of God be not of Debt, but of pure Bounty, yet in the distribution of them the Divine Majesty is pleased to make a difference between one Man and another, and to reward every one according to the Quality and Measure of their Works. And hence it follows

lows, that even such as Love the Lord Jesus in Sincerity, will Gain or Lose in the other World, proportionably as they bestow their precious Hours in this. They will have indeed the same most Blessed God to Contemplate, Love and Adore; the same sorts and kinds of happiness to enjoy; the same uninterrupted and Eternal Duration of it; and every Soul will be Replenished with that Portion, which the undeserved goodness of God shall dispense; But yet there will be various measures of Bliss, tho' it may be impossible for us now to express the manner of the inequality, because *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive the things, which God hath prepared for them that love him.* 1 Cor. 2. 9. 'Tis very probable that the different Degrees of Glory will be answerable to Mens different Capacities; and as their Love to God now is less

less or more Perfect, according as those heights of Affection are, which we attain to here; and according as the Powers of the Soul are improved and Exalted in this Militant State, so will they still be Raised and Perfected in Heaven; and consequently the greater Measures of Happiness we shall be capable of there. Hence it is, that Martyrs are believed to be the nearest unto Christ in Heaven, and to excel other Saints in Glory, because by the more abundant degrees of Mercy: and those Converts who came later into the Vine-yard than others did, reach unto an equal pitch with them, if, like St. *Paul*, they make such vast improvements by their extraordinary Vigour and Zeal, as to overtake in their Labours such as endured the Heat of the day. However we pretend to unfold the Manner and Reason of the thing, it is evident, that in *Fact* there are several degrees of
Hap-

Happiness, and that every one receiveth according to his Works.

This shews how infinitely we are concern'd to redeem our time with all possible industry, not onely that we may be deliver'd from the everlasting pains of a *future life*; but *moreover*, that we may not miss of those great Hopes, or come short of those Expectations, we comfort our selves with now. Every man finds by experience, what affliction it is to be disappointed; especially where the hopes were strong, and the enjoyments desired, of great consequence. And though the faculties of the Soul will be so rectified in a *state of perfection*, that Heaven can be no place for *dejecting* and *macerating* griefs; yet I cannot conceive, but the sense of former neglects must bring with it an abatement of those *transcendent Joys*, which otherwise would have been *attainable*. Nay, were there any

room

room for a *Sorrowful Repentance* in those Blessed Regions above, the Saints there would *repent of nothing more*, then of the loss of their time here, because it is the *occasion* of those *Faults and Follies*, which do set even *Sincere Penitents* in a Lower *Classis*, than those, who lived in an *uninterrupted course* of virtue and Piety.

The sum is; that we should manage our *Expences* of time with all pious and prudent *Frugality*; as being the most *precious* thing in this world, and as that, which will *terminate* at last in an *Immutable state*, where we shall *certainly* be savers or losers to all *Eternity*, as we Redeem, or not Redeem now. And would to God, people would but set aside some, though it were but a small, part of every day to think what *Eternity imports*; and what it is to live without any end, without the least

Ex-

Expectation, or Possibility of an end. Men would fain be *Immortal here*; and act so unconcernedly, as if there were never to be an end of their follies; of which this is one of the greatest, and the most *Palpable*: For dye we must in our respective turns; and as sure as death, *Judgement* will follow; and as the sentence is then, so will every ones lot hold on to *Eternal* ages, without ever coming to a *Period*. Considering therefore how *unchangeable* our state will be, whether in woe or bliss, and how our *Everlasting fortunes* depend upon the use, we make of our time now, we are *infinitely concern'd* to Redeem, what is lost with a very quick hand, least our losses prove utterly and unexpectedly *Irrecoverable*; the time here is short, at the best: The Pleasures of Sin are but for a season: The world passeth away *gradually*; people every day go away *before* it, and

a few feet of Earth will in a little time serve to *immure* the most *Insatiable* and *Troublesome* man, that is in it now. It would be a wise thing to look *forward*; and to *consider*, in what a little space there will be an end of a mans sins and *vanities* here. In a few years *Posterity*, to be sure, will see a vast Alteration; there, the *Haughty* head laid Low; there, the *Unconscionable Oppressors* cut down; there, the *Luxurious* thrown to nourish and fatten worms; there, the Lustful brought to his *Final Rotteness*; there, the *wanton* eye closed; there, the mouth of the *Prophanest Blasphemer* is stopt; and there, a full end put to *vicious courses* here; in all which time the Souls of those *miserable* wretches are gone off with an *Eternity* of Guilt upon them, to an *Eternity* of *Punishment*; which we should lay close to our hearts, could we see the *Passages* and *Sufferings* of spirits, as we do *Bodies*,
when

when they are carried upon mens
shoulders to their graves. And yet
considering, what we are told in our
Creed, as to a future state, and how
Infallible Divine Revelation is, be-
 cause it cometh from God, who know-
 eth all things, and cannot possibly de-
 ceive or be deceived; *methinks* nothing
 can quicken *our endeavors* to Redeem
 our time so much, as this sole *Refle-*
xion, what will become of us at the
 Last? but that men are *generally* Fools,
 in making such *unequal comparisons*, as
 to set *contingencies* against *Certainties*;
 and indeed to Prefer a few *moments*
 before an *Eternity*.

CHAP.

C H A P. IV.

How dangerous the loss of time is, in reference to our present outward fortunes.

BUT besides all this, we are to consider, as the third motive, what may very probably befall us even before we go to our Long homes, if we be not solicitous in time to Redeem our *Lost hours*. It is a Loss, that may be very dangerous in reference to our present outward fortunes. For the illustration of this matter we are to note, that God determines upon his time, when he will make Careless and Incorrigible people Examples of his Justice in ^{the} ~~this~~ world. Though it be one of those secret things which belong unto

Redeeming of Time. 45

to the Lord our God, yet the holy Scripture gives us warrant to believe, that such a fixt time there is, when he visits *Negligent* peoples offences with a Rod, and their sins with *Scourges*; especially this sin, the mis-spending those days and hours, which he is pleased to allot them for works of Piety and *Righteousness*. Gods purpose concerning the old world was, that their days should be an *hundred and twenty years*, Gen. 6. 3. which is not to be understood so, as if he intended to contract peoples lives by shortning the usual term of *Nature*, which in those ages was very long: but that he would in six score years put an end to the world that then was, and destroy all but eight persons by a flood, unless they did Repent of those great wickednesses, by Reason whereof it grieved God at the Heart, that he had made man on the Earth, Gen. 6. 6. It is observable, that our Blessed Saviour speak-

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speaking of a terrible Judgment,
that after his ascension would come
upon the unbelieving Jews ; and di-
recting his disciples to strict vigi-
lance, for fear they too should be
surpriz'd and destroyed with the
rest, makes use of this very instance,
as a powerful argument to make
them watchful ; *Mat.* 24. 37. 38.
39. ' As the days of *Noah* were,
' so shall also the coming of the Son
' of Man be : for as in the days, that
' were before the flood they were
' eating and drinking, marrying and
' giving in marriage, untill the days
' that *Noah* entred into the Ark ;
' and knew (or ; Considered) not
' untill the flood came and took them
' all away, so shall also the coming of
' the Son of man be. Which shews,
that the great cause of the general
deluge was, the general sin of peo-
ple in squandering away their pretious
time upon Pleasures, Riots and De-
bauchery, when God hath set them
their

their Bounds, beyond which he resolves they should not live any longer. The *Time* God pitched upon for the Destruction of the *Amorites*, was the *Fourth Generation* from the Days of *Abraham*, *Gen.* 15. 16. That he sent to *Niniveh* was *forty Days*, *Jonah.* 3. 4. And by the History it appears, that the space fixed for the Destruction of the *Jews* after the Lord *Jesus* his Departure, was *forty years*; the time that had been spent in bringing their *Ancestors* into the Possession of the *Promised Land*. The intermediate space before their Overthrow, is called *Jerusalems Day*, *Luke.* 19. 42. O that thou (*Jerusalem*) hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy Peace! Gods day was to be the next; a day of Horror and Vengeance, that presently came upon *Jerusalem*, as soon as she had Trifled and sinned away her Own.

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By these few instances it appears, that God determines upon a certain *Time*, when he will Punish People Remarkably, if they do not Prevent his Judgements by Redeeming the *Time*, while it is yet called, *To day*. Whence it followeth, that could men be so Foolish as to disbelieve a future State, their present welfare would require them to *Redeem their Time*; because the more they Procrastinate, and the longer they defer that necessary Work, so many degrees the day of Temporal Vengeance approacheth; and the nearer that draweth towards them, and the more steps they take to meet it, the more imminent still is the danger of dropping into unexpected Ruin. This was St. Pauls own Argument for the Redeeming of Time, because (saith he) *The days are evil*, Eph. 5. 16. By Evil days the Scripture sometimes meaneth *Old Age*, and *wise days*.

days of *Infirmity*: And so Solomon speaks, *Eccles. 12. 1. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy Youth, while the evil days come not.* And indeed 'tis proper Admonition for People in that Case, to make a nimble use of their *Time*, to accelerate their Course, and every day to make the quicker and quicker dispatches; like Bodies, whose motion is the swifter and stronger, the nearer they come to their place of Rest. But by *Evil days* the Apostle means, times of *Peril* and *Danger*; and when any Juncture is threatening, it is high time for People to be on the Redeeming hand; because God hath set *His Day*, if they do not bestow *theirs*, as he would have them.

When they Act with that Zeal, Honesty, and Circumspection, which becomes those, who are certain otherwise to be quite undone, then the

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Rod is laid up, and the Visitation
is put off to another day; and so on
still; the farther and farther it is
deferred, the more Industriously
they go on, and persevere in *Well*
doing. For God's Menaces are con-
ditional; he doth always reserve to
himself a power of Revocation,
and still exerts it by delivering Men
from danger, as they do their part
in answering the great Ends of
the Sentence. When *they* Re-
deem their *Time*, God Redeems
Them and their *Fortunes* from De-
struction, and then he is said to Re-
pent of the Evil: 'Tis spoken after
the manner of *Men*, in condescen-
sion to our Capacities; when upon
our due Reformation he *Removes* a
Judgement, which he intended o-
therwise to bring upon us. At what
instant I shall speak concerning a Na-
tion, and concerning a Kingdom,
to pluck up, and to pull down, and
to destroy it; *If that Nation against*
whom

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whom I have pronounced, turn from their Evil, I will repent of the Evil, that I thought to do unto them, Jer. 18 7, 8. Upon this Account, the Apostles Argument, taken from the consideration of dangerous Circumstances, is of great force, because Self-preservation is the first principle of Nature, and that which too often works even against Principles of Religion; but when Religion comes to assist it, by shewing People the Vengeance of God over their Heads, it serves to set all hands at work upon the Redeeming of Time, to prevent a Storm, wherein otherwise they are likely to perish. Many, that are contented to run the hazards of another Life, are very unwilling to lose the Comforts of this, because they love the Present, and their Senses are too strong for Faith, which is the Substance of things not seen, but hoped for, Heb. 11. 1. Therefore when present dangers are

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thoroughly apprehended, Endeavours to avoid them will naturally follow. In such a case, People will no more lose Time, then they will lye in their Beds, if they know the House is ready to be burnt. Now, as certain as Natural Causes work, so certain it is, that Judgments will overtake those, who care not how vainly and wickedly they spend their days. It is that, which seals Men up to Destruction, as it did the *Sodomites*; amongst whose Iniquities, abundance of *Idleness* is reckoned as one, *Ezek. 17 49.* that which drew on a great many Wickednesses, more, and at last turned the whole City into a great Globe of Fire. Therefore when the Hand of God in the least appears, it is an awakening Argument for us all to rise from our Security, and to Redeem the Time, while we have yet any opportunities left us; For the longer we defer this Business

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the harder God will be to be intreated; till in the end he will become utterly inexorable. This seems to be clear from the Parallel, which the Apostle draweth from the Case of Esau Heb. 12. 17. For a Morsel of Meat he sold his Birth-right, and afterwards lost his Father's Blessing by Hunting. Jacob made such an use of his Brothers absence, and of his own Time, that he got the Blessing from him. Esau would have recovered it, but was rejected because he came too late. He found (saith the Apostle) no Place of Repentance, though he sought carefully with Tears; meaning that he could not perswade his Father to Repent of what he had done, so as to alter his mind, and to recal the thing that had gone out of his Lips. This instance the Apostle makes use of as a Reason, why we should take heed, lest we fail of the grace of God, or forfeit our title to his merciful Protection.

on; which yet would be of no force, nor indeed to the purpose, if it were not possible for us to fare as ill as *Esau* did. But *St. Paul's* words shew, that though God be a God of Patience and long suffering, yet there is a time, when he will stay no longer for those, who turn his Grace into wantonness; when he will be deaf to their cries; and will not be prevailed with to Repent of the evil that he hath pronounced against them. I now speak of such evils, as God brings upon men in *this* life; where Punishments are Exemplary; inflicted upon people for good; for the Correction of *improvident* people themselves, and for the admonition of all. The pains of another world are purely *Vindictive*; and such as are both Remediless and Endless; and therefore God leaves room for mercy to the very Last hour of life, when Repentance on our part is hearty and sincere: witness the

Redeeming of Time. 55

acceptance, that penitent thief upon the Cross found; whose case, tho' it was Particular, and not to be drawn into example, so as to encourage any wretches to throw away their time upon presumption of mercy at the Last; yet it argues plainly, that *at what hour soever a Sinner turneth from his evil ways he shall save his Soul alive.* But this doth not always save people from Punishments here; especially such People, as have long *Abused* the Patience and Goodness of God. To this purpose, we may observe, what was said of *Jerusalem*, *Luk. 19. 42.* that the things, which belonged unto her peace, were hidden from her Eyes; and the Reason of it is given *v. 44.* *because she knew not the time of her visitation*; that is, she did not consider her own great interest in time; she would not lay the things belonging to her peace to Heart, notwithstanding so many calls, first from

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 the Prophets that had been sent to
 her, and at Last from the mouth
 of the Son of God himself, the Lord
 of life and Glory. The Result of
 is, that people may quite Sin away
 this their day of Peace; and because
 the more time they lose, the greater
 their dangers are, they should be
 very diligent, while they have fair
 opportunities; while there is a Sea-
 son, an accepted time, a day of salva-
 tion. Seek ye the Lord, while he may
 be found, saith the Prophet, Isa. 55.
 6. Call upon him, while he is near; in-
 timating clearly, that there is a cri-
 tical Juncture, when he will not be
 found, but keep off at a great dist-
 ance, though he be sought after.
 And to this purpose are these fol-
 lowing Texts of Scripture, Prov.
 1. 24. &c. Because I have called, and
 ye refused, I have stretched out my hand,
 and no man regarded; but ye have set
 at nought all my counsel, and would
 none of my Reproof; I also will Laugh

Redeeming of Time.

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at your Calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as Desolation, and your Destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you: Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer, they shall seek me early, but shall not find me. Isa. 65. 12. Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter, because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear, but did evil before mine eyes, and did chuse that wherein I delighted not. And Isa. 7. 15, 16. I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim; therefore pray thou not for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me; for I will not hear thee.

From these several places it appears, that Gods decrees, which in the beginning were Conditional, at length

come to be Peremptory ; and that sentence to be Final and Irrevocable, which was originally designed not for mens *Destruction*, but for their amendment : and because this proceeds from the mis-pending those hours, which God numbeth out unto us all, that we may do the world and our own Souls good, it narrowly concerns us to Redeem our time, before it be too Late. *To day if you will hear his voice ; harden not your hearts*, saith the Psalmist ; as if the deferring of it to another day were a ready course to harden our own spirits, and to make God silent to all our cries in the day of vengeance. This is *your hour, and the power of darkness*, as Christ told those malicious wretches, *Luk. 22. 53.* But Gods power will take its turn, when his own time cometh : and because of that day and hour knoweth no man, but it is wont to steal upon Improvident people, when they

they look not for it, nor are aware of it, we should be every minute, watchful and Ready, by Improving the time *Present* to the best advantage. Who can tell *what a day will bring forth?* Or what shall be *on the morrow?* and considering, how uncertain this world is, and how *Cross* events usually prove, whatever we *Project* or *hope* for, we should not let any blessed opportunities slip away, nor be *Loytering* about, while the main business *stays* for us, lest sudden *destruction* come upon us, as *travail* upon a woman with Child, while we say, *Peace and Safety*, like those foolish People St. Paul speaks of, *1 Thes. 5, 3.*

And would God, we of this Kingdom would seriously lay this thing to heart, while the great Goodness of God towards us doth yet endure! Though we are as apt, as any Nation

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tion, to flatter our selves with *Pro-*
misses of Peace and Safety; especial-
ly *considering* how many years expe-
rience we have had of Gods *merciful*,
and indeed *miraculous* Providence o-
ver us; yet we cannot but discern,
what dangers threaten the whole
Kingdom at this time; and it is to be
wish'd, that that time, which some
trifle away in murmuring and *Com-*
plaints, we would all of us be per-
swaded to employ upon acts of un-
feigned *Repentance*, that God may
be intreated for us, before his arm is
stretched out to cut us off in the mid-
dle of our security. As we have
lost *time*, so Gods Judgments have
gained *ground*; nor is there any o-
ther way left us *now*, but to recover,
what we can of our Losses, by mak-
ing a Quick use of the *Remainder*,
according to the *Laws* of Religion,
and true Christian Prudence. Should
such *desolation* and distress be brought
upon

upon us, which some other *Nations* groan under, it will be too late to say, we did not imagine, that things would have come to this pass. We have, God knows, little reason to think, we are better than other people. If we were not worse, our hopes of safety might be better grounded. But by how much *Atheism* and *Irreligion* go beyond *superstition*, by so much are our provocations greater, and our sins the more crying and importunate, to bring down that vengeance, which we see hovering over our heads. Therefore, the wisest, and the most effectual course, we can take, to prevent our Ruine is, to lay hold on those fair *opportunities* we have, before they are out of our reach, and to redeem the time, while God is yet pleased to give us Leave.

The Promises being duly and thoroughly consider'd, will, I hope, be

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be able enough to carry your thoughts on to the last great enquiry; *vi.* How we may order the matter, so as to Redeem our time to very good purpose?

In order hereunto these five things are necessary:

First, to kindle, and preserve in our hearts a true Christian Zeal.

Secondly, to consider, what sins we have acted, and to make all possible amends for them.

Thirdly, to do all the good we can:

Fourthly, to let no day slip away wholly, without *promoting* our eternal interest in some degree and measure.

And

And Fifthly, to spend as much as may be of the Remainder of our time upon *Devotion*; especially upon the Solemnities of Publick *Devotion in the house of God.*

C H A P.

C H A P. V.

*The way to Redeem our time is,
first, to kindle and preserve
in our hearts a true Christi-
an Zeal.*

I. **T**HE First course to be taken
is to Kindle and Preserve
in our hearts a *True Christian Zeal*. By
a true Christian Zeal I understand, a
Warm and *well Governed* Resolution
to act according to Christ's Laws.
For there are two sorts of Zeal
which are *Faulty*. One, is that which
is not according to *Knowledge*, as St.
Paul tells us, *Rom. 10. 2.* a blind
Passion, or Impetus, that hurries all
before it upon *Presumptions* and
mistakes; and without a deliberate
Calm Examination of the true me-
rits

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rits of the Cause. Such a Zeal was his *Own*, while he yet breathed out threatnings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. *He verily thought, that he was bound to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, Act. 26. 9.* This was his *mistaken* zeal; and therefore he obtained mercy afterwards, because, what he had done, he did *Ignorantly in unbelief, Tim. 1. 3.* There is another sort of zeal, which is not according to *Sobriety*; an Inordinate heat of mind, and that too mis-applied, upon objects, that are not so proper; though the mans Judgment be right and sound: when zeal is employed about minute matters in *comparison*; about the circumstantial, and petite Appendages, rather than that about the essentials of *Religion*: Such a zeal was theirs, who were strict and nice about *Mint, Anis and Cummin*, but omitted the weightier

tier matters of the Law, Righteousness, mercy, and Faith; these things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone, saith our Saviour, *Math. 23. 23.* Our zeal should be attended with *Light*, as well as *Warmth*; with Regularity, and due Application, as well as fervency; and then 'tis a well governed zeal; a *Disposition* made up of a right Principle, and of due temper and Prudence.

Now such a sober earnestness of mind is absolutely necessary in order to the Redeeming of our time, because it is the source and spring of action; the natural principle of all vigorous performances; without which we shall be so far from *doubling* our diligence, that we shall express *none at all*; but indulge our selves with the sluggard, *Pro. 6. 10.* *A Requiem* is all he minds; he makes his life literally a *Dream*; yet a little

the sleep; a little slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep. A bed is an improper place to Redeem time; which slides away there *insensibly*: and a spirit of slumber, and an active mind, are as great contradictions, as Rest and work are. There must be at least such a principle of zeal in this case, as there is of Industry in other cases; a principle that stirs people up to their Business and Pleasures in their *common* course of life. They that love the *World*, begrudge no time, they lay out upon it; but rise up early, sit up late, and eat the bread of sorrows, *Psal. 107. 2.* The reason is; because they have an inordinate and fordid zeal for *Mammon*; it is that inward Principle, that makes them the general comforts of mankind; though for the sake of the world they count that stealth no manner of Robbery. The *Voluptuous* care not, how many hours they throw away upon the Pleasures of
 sin.

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sin. They wait for the Twilight, Prov. 7. 9. They tarry long at the wine, Prov. 23, 30. They rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, and continue until night, till it inflames them, Isa. 5. 11. In short; whatever peoples hearts are set upon, they will be sure to follow with Industry and eagerness: and the true Reason, why they are so sparing of their time in the business of Religion, is because they want such a Principle of vigour, as makes them profuse and Prodigal in other cases. Hence it is, that the Bed or the Belly rob the Closet, because their minds are not there, that sports and pastime go away with those hours, which meditation shou'd take up; and that such portions of the day are bestowed upon vanity and vice, which should be expended upon Prayer. Hence it is too, that the House of God is so neglected; that the Altar is past by, when

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all things are ready, but peoples Hearts; and that they think it long till the Sabbath be over, as those *Jews* did, *Amos* 8. 5. The Reason of all this is, because they are Lovers of other things, more then of God, or Religion, or their own eternal Happiness; there is not that true Christian zeal, which would render all these things a *Delight*, at least would represent them as *Duties*, instead of counting them a *Burden*. As long as men slight *Religion*, or are cold and Indifferent about it, we cannot expect, they should Redeem their time to any Good purpose. To quicken and stir up all our minds for that weighty matter, we should warm our hearts with a brisk and enlivening sense of our duty, and of the Consequents, which depend upon it, We should call to mind the vast advantages, which shall be the reward of a good *Conscience*, and the Present pleasures, which inseparably at-

attend a godly, righteous and sober life. We should often reflect upon the vain, Empty, Perishing *condition* of all *Wordly* matters; that after all our Arts and Labours for them, we must leave them all Behind, and can carry nothing away, but our *Consciences* and works; we should daily *consider*, that we must all dye, and after Death go to Judgment; and think with our selves, what terrible times those will be; what a *Precious* thing an Immortal Soul is; how unchangeable its state will be hereafter, whether it be in misery or Bliss; and what a foolish thing 'twill be to Lose it, though it were for the Gaining of ten thousand worlds now. We should consider with all, what cares are necessary for the saving of a Soul: How many things we are to do, and what little time we have to do them all in, how our days pass away like a shadow? how very *uncertain* the *shortness* of them

them is? how many accidents there are to cut us off, before Nature hath spun out her work to the Full? of what *dangerous consequence* Delays are; what a dismal thing it will be, to be surpriz'd on a sudden? and how Contingent the issues of Repentance may be, though any ill man be permitted to lye long upon his sick bed, with Friends and Prayers about him?

These and the like *Religious* meditations, if rightly entertain'd, will be apt, to inspire us with warm *Resolutions*, to Redeem our time, while it is yet in our hand; to make us *Cautious* of Losing a day more; and to invigorate our souls with such an hearty *principle*, as will render us, not only *Diligent*, but very *Zealous* and *Eager* in a Christian course, which puts me in mind of the *vigorous Resolutions* of that great *Apostle St. Paul*, whose indefatigable Industry and zeal to Redeem the time he had lost,

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is a Noble pattern for ours, *Phil. 3. 12. 13. 14. I follow after*, saith he, *forgetting those things, which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things, which are before; I press on toward the mark, for the Prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* He there compared himself to one, that was running a Race, to obtain a Garland at the *Mark* or *Goal*, or *Race-end*. Those, which are engaged in such an *Athletick Course*, are not wont to stop and loiter away their Minutes, or to stand looking behind them, to see what lengths and distances they have ran, and how far they have out-strippt the Combatants, that are short of them; but strive and stretch forward, each straining every Sinew to overtake and out-run the foremost, that he may receive the Prize first. And thus did St. Paul proceed with Constancy, zeal, and Earnestness in that Spiritual Course wherein he was a Combatant (tho

a late one) for a Crown, that withereth not away nor fadeth. He was on the pursuit; he made as much speed as was possible; strove hard, and went on vigorously from one labour and difficulty to another; he fetch'd up and recover'd the Time he had mispent, by Toiling and Working, and Travelling more abundantly than the rest; impatient Day and Night, till he had out-gone, and out-done those, that had been called before him, and still pressing forward, and stretching on for the Prize he had in his Eye, that Eternal weight of Glory, which was laid up for him in the Heavens.

By this instance we see, what a warm and well govern'd zeal is; how powerful in its Influence; what Life and Vigour it creates, and what wonderful Works it can do in a little Time; when a Man is resolved to Redeem it indeed. And that we

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may follow St. *Paul's* Example, 'tis necessary to set up (as he did) a serious and obstinate Resolution, to do God Service from our *Hearts*, and our selves and others all the good we can, while we have fair Opportunities before us. Such a Christian Zeal will make Us too active and nimble in *running the Race that is set before us* ; t'will carry us with Patience and Constancy through All ; so that no Pains will be begrudged ; no thoughts of Difficulty will put us to a stand ; no apprehensions of Danger will make us faint ; no sense of Discouragements will cast us down ; 'twill help us to go on still from Vertue to Vertue, fearful of nothing, but of losing *Time* ; till at last we come to that great pitch St. *Paul* attained to : *I have fought a good fight ; I have finished my course ; I have kept the Faith ; henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous*

righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to all them also, that love his appearing, 2 Tim. 4. 7. 8.

C H A P. VI.

A second way is, to consider what Sins we have acted, and to make all possible amends for them.

Secondly, **T**His zealous Disposition being form'd in our Minds, the next way to Redeem our time is, to consider what Sins we have acted, and to make all possible amends for them. The time that is flung away upon vice is not merely lost, but consumed wickedly; and in this case there is as much difference between losing and waiting, as there

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is between idleness and mischief;
or between doing nothing at all, and
doing that, which is Evil. Now
here the way of Redeeming ones
time is, as far as 'tis possible, to un-
doe that which hath been done;
and to perform such acts of repen-
tance, as are declarative of our hear-
ty wishes, that the things had ne-
ver been done at all. For, to *con-*
tinue in a wicked Course, or, not
to make some *Reparation* for a wick-
ed *Act*, is a spending of time as Ill,
as at the first; because it carries
with it a tacit *Approbation* of mind,
which is *Tantamount* to the *Commit-*
ting it again over and over. Nay,
Sins continued in, or un-repented,
are more pernicious in their *Conse-*
quence, than they were in the origi-
nal; because they harden the heart,
and by degrees draw such a crusty
temper upon the *Conscience*, as makes
it insensate; so that the losing of
time *on*, is the ready means of ma-
king

king one uncapable at last of Redeeming it at all. This shews, that by persisting in that which is evil, instead of *recovering the hours* that were wickedly spent, men mis-employ them still, and make the matter daily worse and worse. Therefore, when an ill thing is acted, they should endeavour to obliterate it by a very speedy repentance; and the sooner they come to it, the more time and Innocence they save, and the quicker they make all Right again. An instance to this purpose we read of in the Church of Corinth, upon St. Paul's laying the Ecclesiastical Censures on those, who had committed some Scandalous Enormities, 2 Cor. 7, 9, 11. Ye were made Sorry, saith the Apostle; after a godly manner; — And that your Sorrow, what carefulness is wrought in you? Yea, what clearing of your selves? Yea, what Indignation? Yea, what Fear? Yea, what vehement Desire? Yea, what Zeal?

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Zeal? Yea, what Revenge. That is,
their speedy Repentance had such
great effects upon them, that they
were very *Sollicitous* to expiate their
offences; they purged themselves
presently of the Crimes committed:
they express'd the displeasure and
vexation for the *commission* of them;
they were afraid of offending God
any more; they shewed all readiness
to give the Church Satisfaction for
what had been done among them;
they declared their firm *Resolu-
tions* of *Reforming* for the time to
come; and they used all possible se-
verities, to inflict Punishment upon
themselves, for the wrongs they
had done their own souls, and for
the Reproach, they had brought up-
on their most holy Profession. This
is a Right way for people to Re-
deem their time; because it is in
effect, to destroy and spoil the works
of their hands, to make the days
perish, wherein they did amiss; and

to begin their lives a new, as if those days had never been.

Though *strictly* speaking, we cannot utterly Null our works, so as to make those things never to have been, which are actually past, yet *Morally*, and by *Interpretation* we may Annihilate our actions, and Revoke what is gone, if our Repentance be Hearty and operative like that which those *Corinthians* express'd.

Now here men should examine the *Quality* and *Condition* of their crimes past, that they may Redeem their time by such *Indignation* for them, and such holy revenges upon themselves as are suitable.

Some sins are *Injurious* to the Souls of the *Actors* only; such as a man committeth alone, and by himself, without any witness of them, but his own Conscience and God. In this case the right course is, to be-

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take ones self to Private, but sincere
humiliations; to deprecate God's
wrath; to chasten the Soul by Fast-
ing and severe *mortifications*; to be-
stow more time than usual upon
meditation and Prayer; to break off
ones sins by Righteousness, and
ones iniquities by shewing mercy to
the Poor; and above all, to leave
the sin, or sins, entirely off, and by
the continual exercise of contrary
vertues to bring the mind to a regu-
lar frame and temper. This is to
undo an Evil action, to cancel all
that Guilt which is *Private, Perso-
nal, and Single*, to Recover what is
past and gone, by such a moral Re-
vocation as God will accept of, and
for Christ's sake Impute to the sin-
cere Penitent as Amends for his
former miscarriages.

There are other sins, which are of
a more *Publick and Pestilential* na-
-ture: Sins, that besides the inward
Guilt

Guilt they bring upon the actors Conscience, carry along with them outward infection, mischief and scandal, as Defamation, Lying, Adultery, evil Suggestions, Injustice of all sorts, and whatever wickedness else is exemplary and hurtful to other men. These crimes are much the worse, because it is a very difficult (and sometimes impossible) matter to make full amends and satisfaction for them, (and consequently to Redeem the time they have lost; because the sin may spread so far, and may last so long in its mischievous effects, as to be out of ones Reach and Power to Recall it, so as to Null it utterly. In this case therefore the only means a man hath left him to Redeem his time is, to do what he is *Able towards* the Revocation of his wickedness; and that must be, not only to cease from doing it any more, but *moreover* to make all possible Reparation for

what hath been done already ; were it only Private, *single* guilt, the Conscience might be discharged of it by those ways I mentioned just now ; but considering, that it is *complicated* and *aggravated* by the Additional guilt of *Injustice* and *Scandal*, much more is required to wipe it off. All possible means must be used to cure the mischievous *effects* of such criminal actions ; the *Consequence* of them must be stopt, and Amends made for the hurt done before the revocation of them ; because without this the whole sin cannot be undone, but is rather avowed and Continued in, and by construction and in effect Repeated every day ; upon which account the wretch is so far from Redeeming his time, that he Trifles it away, and sins it on *still*, every hour of his life is Lost ; his Prayers, all Lost ; his very Repentance, whatever it be, is lost too, because it is so short and Imperfect ; and should
such

such a man live to a Decrepit old age, he would be as far from Gods Pardon, as when the sin was first acted; and indeed much farther, by reason of the Long, *Repeated* aggravation of his Guilt, by Persisting still in the wickedness, and by permitting the malignity of it to run on. For the Illustration of this matter it is necessary to put some particular cases; and they shall be these Four. First, if a man once corrupteth his neighbours wife, or virgin, or whatever the condition of the foolish creature be, with whom the villany is acted; it is not enough to act it no more; there is an Injury done, and that which may be Irreparable and eternal; whether it will not prove so, is more than the Adulterer knows: he has done his part to damn her Reputation and her Soul too; and therefore it is not sufficient to forbear for the future, no more than it is for a Murtherer to proceed no further, when

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when he has already given a mortal stab; in this case all possible endeavours should be used for the *Saving* of life; as in the other, all possible means must be applyed for the saving of a *Soul*. Whether it shall perish or no, it is at Gods pleasure, in whose hand it is: But whatever the success may be, all ways of Reparation must be *Try'd*; otherwise the Sin is still abetted and Persisted in, till the Adulterers own-Soul be past Redemption, as well as his *Time*.

Again; a Good Name is better than precious ointment, saith Solomon, Eccl. 7. 1. And if an enemy take it away by Libels or Lyes, nay, though it be uncharitable Truths, the wrong is manifest; nor will it suffice (though that be more than some will do) to forbear at length to throw about the Poison of an *Asp*: the *Viper* has already done his venemous work, and

and whether the Defamation doth stick long or no, the Guilt of it sticks upon the slanderers Conscience; there it resteth till *Satisfaction* be made for the calumny, and an effectual course be taken, to set the good mans Name right again, and to Restore it to its former Savour; for as long as the stench continues, the Sin *operates*; the wretch hath still the Guilt, though he thinks it to be the *Wisdom* of the Serpent: nor is it possible for him to wipe it off, but by his Recovering that which he caused to be Lost; by applying some such Antidote to expel the poison, as Naturalists say the very worst of Serpents yield. Till a Recantation gives a check, the Calumny goes on, and consequently his Guilt; and instead of Redeeming his time, he loseth more. Thirdly; in the case of Theft, or oppression) which is defrauding and Theeving by dint of *Power*) there is to be

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be consider'd, besides the sinfulness of the Act, the Injury that attends it. Now tho it be very Right, what the *Apostle* says, *Ephes. 4. 28. Let him that stole, steal no more*; yet this is no Redeeming of time without some Compensation: because the man is a wrongful Possessor of anothers Propriety, nor can Possession ever give him a Title to that, which is not founded upon Justice. There must be therefore *Restitution* according to ones *Power*; *Restitution* in kind, or Equivalence; otherwise, the sin Remaines, though committed but once, because the Injury continues; and so, both the sin and Injury will continue on, till both be expiated and abolish'd by satisfaction. 4. Lastly; if by evil *Instructions*, or worse example one man leads another into Error, or Impiety, the true way for him to Redeem his time after all is, to Cure the mischief by an hearty *retraction*. Errors many times spread

spread like a Gangrene, insensibly, speedily, and mortally : and such as have been guilty of casting the venom, must not (though they Repent) think their Consciences sufficiently discharged by forbearing for the future : here Double diligence must be used ; first to stop, then to cure the malady, by Reclaiming those they have mis-guided ; and, being now converted themselves, to convert others also *from the error of their way*, Jam. 5. 20. Briefly, where any hurt hath been done to the Reputation, Fortunes, or Souls of men, the only way one hath to Redeem his time is, as far as 'tis possible, to redeem his Guilt, and to recover his *Innocence* by making all the Compensation he can, and by expressing his Zeal to Annihilate his actions, by making Amends for them.

This was the Ground St. Paul himself went upon, when he Laboured

boured so Abundantly after his Conversion. It was, to extirpate the false Principles he had propagated before, to satisfy the Church for the wrong he had done it, and by his extraordinary zeal for Christianity, to prepare people for God in all parts of the world, wherever he could go. His great design was, to recover what he could of the time he had Lost, while he was so strict a *Pharisee*, And the same thing was the reason of those severities used in the Primitive ages; when Criminals were wont to indict on themselves great Penances; to macerate their bodies by hard discipline; to give themselves to austere Fasting; to wallow on the ground; to cover themselves with Sackcloth and Ashes; to make publick acknowledgment of their offences; to throw themselves at their fellow Christians Feet, and upon their knees to beg the Prayers of Good people at the Church

Church doors ; as *Tertullian* tells us in his book of *Repentance*. Those acts of mortification proceeded from a principle of Humility, and a deep sense of sin and of time mis-spent ; till superstition crept into the Church and turned them into meer Pageantry : or the most useful instructions we can gather from them is this ; that to Redeem ones time to good purpose, one right Christian way is to make all possible amends and Reparation for evil actions, as carry along with them *Injury*, and *Scandal* besides the Guilt, which the Conscience contracted from the Sinfulness of their *Nature*.

CHAP.

C H A P. VII.

A Third way is, to do all the good one can.

Thirdly, A Nother way of Redeeming ones time is, to do all the good one can.

To do Good, is to be truly Useful to others in his generation according to the Abilities God hath given him, and in that calling and Station wherein the Providence of God hath disposed of him. We all came into the World to serve God, and to help one another; nor have we any other business here. The Saviour of the World, that lost not an hour of this life, ~~went~~ *went about doing good, Act. 10. 18.* And thereby shewed, how unpardonable their negligence is, who trifle away their time, when they have
 so

Redeeming of Time. 91

*so many objects of Charity before them,
and those, whose Necessities are so great.*

Before I proceed upon this subject, we must observe, that a mans own necessities are to be regarded first. For Love to ones self being the *Rule and Standard* of that Charity, we owe our Neighbours, it ought to have the Precedency, and to challenge the Principal share of our time and Pains. And here we should consider our own wants duly. I do not mean our necessities as to the things of the World; in which respect mens wants are often as Imaginary, as **their** appetites are Insatiable: but I speak of *Real* necessities; those of the **Soul**, which require our Constant and more Particular care, because they are of the greatest Concernment, and the hardest to be supplied.

We must begin with the *Understanding*;

standing; for the Notions which lodge there are the spring of action; and according as they are sound and Rotten, so are our lives good or bad, and so is our time well or ill employed. Great care therefore must be taken to have a right Judgement in all points (the first thing which the soul stands in such need of.) And to do it substantial good in this respect, men should sedulously bestow what fair opportunities they have upon Contemplation, Reading, and Profitable studies. For the soul Naturally is neither a Divine, nor *Philosopher*, though indued with Faculties to fit it for the Noblest speculations. It must be under *Pedagogy* and *Papilage*; nor can the Ripest years *Manumit* it from a state of *Tuition*. Knowledge doth still increase by the good Improvements we make of our hours; and this is the sad reason of some mens Ignorance, (especially as to matters they

they should know most of) because the time they should bestow upon good books, they *Dream* away in sloth, or *Sin* away in vice, or *Fool* away in sports, and many childish *Vanities*, which they abusively call, *Diversion*; a word, which importeth *Business*, when indeed they will have *none* to be diverted *from*.

But a weak *mind* is not so bad as a wicked *Temper*. There are many Corruptions in the *Lower* faculties of the Soul, which greatly need an helping hand to cure; depravations of nature, which are much the worse, because they make men like unto the *very Beasts*, that perish for want of *morality* as well as of *understanding*. Here the way to do ones soul good indeed is, to cleanse it from its vices; to govern its *Passions*; to mortify its *Lufts*; to rectify its *Appetites*; to wean it from *Sensual Pleasures*; and to destroy that Malice, Envy

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Envy, Pride, Revengefulness, and
Implacability of disposition, which
make a man Resemble, not so much
a Brute, as the very Devil.

These vices *therefore* are proper and
necessary things to imploy ones time
upon; because they are the things,
which bring the wrath of God upon
the children of *disobedience*; the
things which *Pollute the Conscience*,
and cost the Soul its peace in this life,
and its *Felicity* in *another*; nay, the
things, which are not only the *worst*
for their effects, but the most *Diffi-*
cult also to be cured, because they
are rooted in the Heart; they are a
Part of us; and it *requires* no little
diligence, Industry, and skill to be
too Hard for *Nature*; especially when
it comes to be *strengthened* by *Custom*
and when evil *Inclinations* are im-
proved into a pernicious Habit,

The truth is, if people would
Hus-

Redeeming of Time. 95

Husband their time well, they might find a great deal of work for themselves at *Home*. Yet this must not *saperfede* the doing of good *abroad* too. There are Divers necessities, which God hath made us all Subject unto, that in some respect or other, each of us might be serviceable to his neighbours: and as various as these Necessities are, so various are the opportunities, we have of disposing our time to the best advantage, and after the most becoming manner. Eating and Drinking, and other sensualities, are the life of Animals, whose end is destruction. The life of a man, (especially of a *Christian*) is to do good: this sets him above all other Creatures here below, and makes him like unto the blessed God himself, whose goodness the whole earth is full of, and whose compassions fail not. To neglect this, is to throw aside our great business for the sake of mean employments,

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ments, which will turn to no account,
but to awaken our Consciences here-
after, and to grieve us for our Folly,
in flinging away that now, which
our last Death-bed sorrows will
shew to have been of the highest
Price.

I Know, nature must be provided
for, and that there are several Re-
creations, which are Innocent in
themselves, and in their kind, ne-
cessary to preserve us in health and
vigour, that we may serve God,
and spend our serious hours the more
acceptably. But how many un-
lawful delights are there, which
should have no part at all of our ti-
me allowed them? How many are
there, which Border upon vice, so
that little time cannot be afforded
them without danger? How many,
that are the occasions of sin, though
not vicious in their own Nature?
and how many even of the most
harm-

harmless ones, which are so inordinately pursued, that instead of being a Relaxation, they become a kind of Trade? Should an appeal be made to the consciences of idle and vain persons themselves, they could not but confess, that much leisure might be well spared for Pious, and charitable purposes, which there is no sort of necessity for them to waste other ways, but to take off that time which hangs upon their fingers. And yet to Redeem time, the greatest remainder of it should be bestow'd upon doing of Good. *There is one place of Scripture, that directs us, to break off our Sins by Righteousness, and our Iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor, Dan. 4. 27, meaning, that men should make reparation for what is past, by doing eminent acts of Justice and Charity for the time to come. There is another place that tells us, He which*

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his way, shall save a Soul from Death,
and shall hide a multitude of sins,
Jerem. 5. 20. And there is a third
place, that saith of Charity in general,
that it shall cover a multitude of Sins,
1 Pet. 4. 8. Now, though none of
these Texts mean, that the doing of
Good Justifies a man, or Necessitates
his pardon, by any natural Causality,
Efficiency, or virtue of the work done
(for that would be injurious to the
doctrine of Gods free grace, and to
our Saviours Merits and satisfaction
) yet thus much they all imploy, that
for Christ's sake God is pleased of
his own goodness, to impute to us
our good and charitable performan-
ces, and to accept them as the con-
dition and means of that pardon,
which he freely gives unto all, who
bring forth fruits meet for Repen-
tance.

This shews, That to do all the
Good we can, is the ready way to
re-

redeem our Time effectually. Which yet is to be understood of *increasing* our Diligence in doing what good we are able; so as to delight in it, and to make it the constant and urgent Business of that part of our Life, which is left us. There is no recovering of our lost Time, without doubling at least our Labour and Industry. For Charity is a standing Law of Christ; the great Rule we should have all gone by, as soon as we were past the things of Children. At Twelve Years of Age the Lord Jesus was found sitting in the midst of the Doctors, not so much to hear, as to instruct them. It was his Father's Business, the necessary Work of doing Good he was then about. Which noble Example of Charity teacheth all Mankind to begin *betimes* to do good Offices; and it upbraids us all with our Neglects, in losing so many fair Opportunities we have had from

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our Youth. Therefore we should
remember our great Omissions,
when we go about the Redeeming
of our Time, because of those we are
to make compensation for: And
considering this cannot be done by
that ordinary zeal and industry,
which must have been express'd, had
we been useful in our Generation
from the *beginning*, it must needs
be incumbent upon us to labour the
more abundantly, to make up those
Defects, for which in Conscience
we are answerable. For in this case
we are to consider, what is our
standing Duty still, and what we
are behind hand in: And to fill up
the measure of our Good Works,
we should do as much in one Day,
as might have taken up two, had
we acted regularly all along. For
unless our Diligence be doubled,
however we may be supposed, after
our Repentance, to spend our Time
well, we cannot be said to *Redeem* it,
because,

because a great part of it is yet in
Arrear.

I observed before, that St. Paul compares our Christian Progress to a Race; and that single Comparison will be enough to illustrate this matter. If the Combatants do not start together; or, though they do, if all keep not on with equal Pace, Time and Ground will soon be lost, tho' none of them come as yet to stretching and straining for the Victory. The Sluggard, that loyters away his Minutes; the Trisler, that is willing to be diverted by impertinent Excursions; and the unwary Wretch, that stumbles and falls by not looking to his Steps; These ill Husbands of their Time, who might have finished their Course laudably, by constant, treatable, and moderate striving, having fallen much short of the rest by their own Tardiness, are now under a great
Ne-

Necessity of exerting their utmost Strength and Vigour to *recover* their Minutes what they can; nor have they any other way left them, but to *signalize* themselves by extraordinary Pressings on, and by trying all their Abilities and Breath to the last: Why, thus it is in our Christian Course, in the Race, that leadeth to Eternal Life, or Death. Some from the beginning run the way of God's Commandements with Patience, and Alacrity, and a constant zeal: And happy are they, who remember their Creator from the days of their Youth; but these comparatively are but few. Others neglect the business of their Salvation, minding and loving the World only, as if they were to stay in it for ever. Others fly out into Extravagancies and Vanities, as the Devil or the Flesh tempts them out of their way. Others fall into Apostacy from Truth and Religion; and of all these there is
none

none that doth solid Good, nor is likely to come to Good, till either the Sense of God's Goodness leads them, or the fear of his wrath and justice drives them to Repentance. Considering therefore what Time they have lost, and how nearly it concerns them to Redeem it, their only Course is, to gird up their Loins with Resolution; to set about it with Vigour; to use their utmost Diligence; to labour the more Industriously; to abound in all manner of Good Works; and being converted themselves, to apply all possible means to strengthen their Brethren; as our Saviour told *Peter* in reference to the future Recovering himself from his Apostacy, *Luke. 22, 32.*

And here People should consider well, what sorts there are of Good Works, that they may be the better able to Redeem their Time, by doing Good indeed. As, to Inform

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and Teach the Ignorant, and put
them in often remembrance of their
Duty in all things; to admonish
such as do amiss; to be great Exam-
ples of Godliness, Righteousness,
and Sobriety; and by all Christian
Arts to promote the True Power
and the universal Practice of Reli-
gion; to restore the Good Name,
that was unjustly taken away; to
make ample Reparation for all Vi-
olence and Fraud; and to do this
readily and heartily, with the ex-
emplary zeal of *Zacheus*, restoring
Fourfold even for False Accusations.
To rid ones Hands of Mammon got-
ten by Unrighteousness, and to make
Satisfaction for Wrongs and Inju-
ries; to forgive an Enemy; to vin-
dicate the Innocent; to relieve the
Oppressed; to help those, who are
in Streights and Necessity; to comfort
the Afflicted; to visit the Fatherless
and Widow in their Distress; to
be Eyes to the Blind, and Feet to
the

Redeeming of Time.

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the Lame; to Feed the Hungry, and Cloath the Naked, and Assist the Sick; to Pray for all; and to reach out a kind Hand to all; according as their wants, and according as our Abilities and Opportunities are. This is to *Do Good*.

And for the Redeeming of Time well, it is necessary for those, who have been slack, or forgetful of these main Offices, to *heighten* their zeal in the Performance of them, to dispatch them with a very quick Hand, and with a twofold Expence of Industry and Labour; because otherwise they cannot make up that Time which hath been lost, nor compensate for what they have been wanting in. For these things they ought to have done *before*; they would have been necessary Works, had they been very frugal of their Hours; because to do Good is a Law of Religion and Nature too,

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which bindeth perpetually. Now, as the Payment of a New Debt is no Discharge of an Old Arrear, so neither is doing of Good Offices at present a Deseifance of former Obligations. The answering one's Duty at one time, is no Requital for Omissions at another, unless there be a large Supplement of Righteousness and *Charity*. To use our Saviour's Words in another case *Matth. 23. 23. These things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.* 'Tis this *Addition* of Industry and zeal, which makes a Man acceptable with God; as was observed before from that Rule, that is to be in the Day of Retribution; the Last shall be as the First, and the First as the Last; that is, Every Man shall receive according to his Works: And that Peoples Acquisitions may be the same Proportion of Good Works, either as to length of Time, or increase of In-

Industry : Labours in the Vineyard, if they be *late*, are to be *double*, to entitle the Workmen to an Equality of Reward ; as was shewed particularly from the Instance of *St. Paul*, who laboured more abundantly than the rest, and thought himself obliged to do so, because he had not been so early a Convert as others.

When therefore you set your self about this most necessary Work of Redeeming your Time, reflect upon your Life past, and consider seriously, what Sins you have been guilty of ; what sorts of Righteousness you have been most averse to ; what Duties you have been defective in, what fair Opportunities of doing Good you have wilfully omitted ; and accordingly apply your whole Mind, Strength and Soul to the Exercise of all those Vertues, the Practice whereof you have hitherto neglected ; and pursue this Course with

with such Resolution, Constancy and Vigour, as if you were now to retrieve your Original Innocence; and as if you had no other Business in the World for the future, but to do all manner of Good to the utmost of your Power. *Let him that stole, steal no more, saith St. Paul, Ephes. 4. 28.* But that is not all: It follows, *Rather let him labour, working with his hands the things that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth:* You see, where Injustice hath abounded, there Industry and Charity must abound, and that much more; and so in all other Cases, wherein a Man hath been either wanting, or excessive, he must atone for it by a most lively, operative, and earnest zeal to do all the Good he can, that he may be full of Good Works, though the Remainder of his Time be short.

C H A P. VIII.

IV. **T**HE next Way of Redeeming your Time, is, *Not to let any one Day slip away wholly, without promoting your Eternal Interest in some degree and measure.* The wiser and stricter Sort of Moralists among the Old Heathens advised People to make choice of a Scheme of Vertue for the Rule of their Lives; and to order all their Actions according to it Day by Day. As thus; To begin their Works with earnest Prayers to God; to honour God before all things; to have a religious Regard for Oaths; to reverence their Parents; to love their Friends; to delight in good Men; to keep the Body with all its Faculties and Desires, in subjection; for very Shame

to

to abstain from every thing that is Evil, both abroad and in private; to practice Vertue with Sincerity of Heart; to look upon Riches as a thing that perisheth, and as such to slight them; to study how to resemble God in the Dispositions of the mind, and to make that ones Aim and Pleasure; to be contented with ones Condition; and at all times to submit to God's Providence, who often gives good Men these outward Matters with a sparing Hand; to be inflexible and constant in a virtuous Course; to weigh ones Actions well beforehand, and to consider the Nature and Consequence of them; to observe Temperance and Moderation; to be meek, and patient, and just, and cautious in all cases. Such Rules as these some old Moralists directed People to live by daily. And then, every Night before they went to sleep, they directed them to examine themselves
strict-

strictly, how they had spent the Day; that, if they had lived according to Rule, they might have for their present Reward the Pleasures and Joys of a Good Conscience; but, if they had transgress'd, that they might repent, and thereby learn the better how to amend their Lives the Day following. To this end, before you take your Repose, say they, ask your self, wherein you have transgress'd? What you have done? And so, look over all your Actions the Day past two or three times, that no one thing may escape Scrutiny and Examination. This was a great Advice, especially for Heathens to give: And it brings to my remembrance, what *Suetonius* relates of one of the *Roman* Emperours, that good natur'd Prince, *Titus*, who for the Sweetness of his Temper was call'd, The Love and Delight of Mankind: Considering once, as he was at Supper, that he had

had not done that Day such Acts of Kindness and Bounty as he was wont to do, said, *Diem perdidit*, I have quite lost this Day. Some Greeks that speak of this Story, render his Saying thus, *Σήμερον οὐκ ἐβασίλευσα*; or, *This Day I have not reigned*; I have not been a Prince: As if all his Greatness consisted in doing Good daily, and as if he had thrown away his Authority and Power, in suffering a Day to pass without some considerable Testimonies and Marks of his Goodness. He remembered *Pythagoras* his Rule of Self-examination at Night, and of Repenting for Failings: And however the Story be told, it comes all to one in effect: And no less a Man than *St. Jerome* takes particular Notice of it, in his Comments on the Sixth Chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians, and makes use of it to the Reproof and Shame of negligent Christians. If (saith he) the Emperor Titus (a Man

Man, that was a Stranger to the Law, to the Gospel, to the Doctrine of our Saviour and the Apostles, if he) was so concerned for the loss of one Day, how should not we be concern'd for the loss of so many Days and Tears too? And the Truth is, since Jesus Christ doth expect, that our Righteousness should exceed the Righteousness even of the strictest Professors among the Jews, (the Scribes and Pharisees) we cannot expect less than the greatest Condemnation, if at last it cometh short of the Righteousness of Philosophers and Heathens. As we are under the Laws and Discipline of a Master, who is infinitely greater than a Pythagoras, or than Moses himself; so is our Vigilance and Diligence to be much greater than their Scholars was. The Covenant given us carries with it a Prospect of far better things, than were manifestly and explicitly promised of old to the Jews themselves: And

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And upon that account there is a Necessity for us to be better Hus- bands of our Time, that we may obtain them.

The Great Promise God hath gi- ven us, is, of Eternal Happiness with himself; and to quicken our Endeavours after it, these two things require our serious and *daily* Consi- deration.

1. First, What is necessary on our part in Order to Eternal Happi- ness.

2. Secondly, How Assiduous and Constant our Care had need be, to do that daily which is indispensa- bly required of us; something of it at least.

1. First then, the thing necessary on our Part, in order to Eternal Hap- piness, is, a God-like Temper, and Dis-

Disposition of *Mind*. Though our Saviour hath purchased for us a *Liberty* to enter into that Holy and Blissful place above; yet to *prepare* us for it, such a frame of Heart is requisite, as will make it to us a place of Happiness *indeed*. Now that must needs be a Divine Frame; or a Temper suitable to the Nature of God. For we must not think that the meer Possession of Heaven makes the Spirits of Men Happy; nor that a quiet Grief-less Condition is that wherein all Felicity doth consist. Happiness, that is compleat and perfect, must answer all the Faculties of the Soul; especially its Affections; and God must be the Glorious Object for us to *Enjoy*; that is, to Admire, and Love, and delight in, to all Eternity. There must be therefore an Assimilation of Temper, and a likeness of Mind; because Dissimilitude naturally carries with it Displacency

placency, and Averseness, which is no more reconcilable with Happiness, than Love is with Hatred. To live happily with God and Christ, we must be of the same Dispositions; And it was for this great Reason, that when Christ lived with us upon Earth, he gave us so many Spiritual and Divine Laws. They were not purely Arbitrary Commands, proceeding from God's absolute and uncontrollable Pleasure, meerly to try and exercise our Obedience; but they were intended as Wise and Gracious Methods, to Polish our Minds, to Perfect our Nature, and to raise it by degrees to such an high and Noble Pitch, that it might come near to the most Perfect and Blessed Nature of his Father, for the Fruition of whom he came to fit us.

To answer therefore his great Ends, 'tis necessary for us to form
in

in our Hearts a Divine Goodness of Temper, by the help of those Precepts, which he hath laid before us, with a design somewhat like to Jacob's, Gen. 30. when he laid before the Cattel pilled Rods, to make them conceive Lambs of a suitable Colour. Those Divine Rules, which are proposed to us to observe, are to make us Partakers of the Divine Nature; to renew in us the Divine Image; to shape in our Souls a Resemblance of God, and all this, that we may be meet for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light; because without such a Similitude it is impossible for us, either to please God, or to be pleased with him.

2. These things being thoroughly considered, it will manifestly appear in the second place, that we are strictly concern'd to make diligent and daily use of our Time, to do what is necessary towards our everlasting

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lasting Happiness. For it is a thing
of no sudden dispatch; but that
which requires all the time, a Man
can find in his whole Life, to do it
well. Those Moral Vertues, which
serve to perfect us, and to make us
like unto God, are not poured out
all in an instant, as those miracu-
lous Gifts were of Old; much less
can they become presently habitual.
There is required a constant Course
of repeated Actions to acquire and
fix them; and this requires Assi-
duity of Practice: Day by Day
some part or other of this necessary
Work must be dispatch'd: Other-
wise the Difficulties of it will in-
crease; in *This* respect like secular
business, which when it comes in
upon us in abundance, grows under
our hands by being neglected, tho'
but for a Day.

In the prosecution of this Matter,
let us consider, what labour the ve-
ry

Redeeming of Time. 119

ry *Beginnings* call for. The first Task we are about is, to rectifie our Corrupt Nature; which is a thing that obligeth us to continual attendance and care over it, because it is like a sort of Soyl, which is still apt of it self to run to Weeds, even without our watering. We brought with us from the Womb the Seminal Principles of Evil. And as these appear betimes, so they rise quickly to a great head, and heighth, like Nettles and such other Trash, which taint the Ground still the more, by casting new Seeds for their Propagation. Here then the Work should be early, for the saving of Time; to cultivate our Nature from our Youth, with a quick hand to check those Vices, which are like Poysonous Weeds in us; and to make all Trumpery to Dye daily, as the Man grows. Pride, Anger, Spightfulness, Envy, Lust, Sensuality, Inordinate Self-Love, Rough.

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Roughness, and Intractability of
Spirit; and whatever comes under
the notion of *ill Nature*; these are
very Noxious things, that spring
out of us, and that stain and vitiate
the whole Man more and more dai-
ly; and therefore require constant
Diligence to extirpate them what
we can, while the Mind is yet soft,
tender and pliant: Because when
once the Devil irrigates, and cust-
om confirms them, they will be the
harder and harder to be Eradicated.
Many a Soul is spoil'd and ruin'd for
want of good Education in time.
The Practise of Sin brings Delight
with it; Pleasure makes it Custom-
ary; Custom renders it habitual;
and when that, which was a Fault,
comes to be Wickedness; (studied,
acted, repeated Vice, and deeply
Rooted;) the Labour in clearing
the Soul of it, will be as different
in proportion, as it is between
drawing a little Shrub, and grub-
bing up a sturdy Tree. The

This confirms the Matter we are now upon, *viz.* that in new moulding our Hearts to fit our selves for Eternal Felicity, we should Redeem our Time by doing something *every day* that is considerable. For the Time we *Lose*, or *Neglect*, Vice *Gains*; and thereby becomes the more difficult to be subdued and mortified. *Can the Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do Evil, Jer. 13. 23.* To break an Habit, especially on a sudden, is like the evading and forcing of Nature, which is not to be done without a *Violent* hand. Whether it be in a Good or in an evil Course of Life, the Powers of the Soul gather strength by exercise and use; but much more in an evil Course; because our outward Senses being thereby wont to be gratified, fall into a Confederacy with our outward Propensions; and between
F both,

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both, Reason finds it a very hard
matter to keep it self from being
Captivated. Upon which account
it must needs require Time, to re-
cover that Dominion which is its
Right and Prerogative. And tho'
Grace comes in to its assistance, yet
considering, that the Spirit of God
worketh in a moral way, by exci-
ting, moving, and perswading,
but not constraining, the Conquest
cannot be present and instantaneous.
For as long as Nature is at the bot-
tom, it will appear, and that with
Vigour, when it hath the aid and
help of Sense, and when custom
hath given it a kind of Title to the
Mastery. This shews what great
Necessity there is for a Man, to be-
stow pains upon himself *Daily*; be-
cause it is this which will give him
a gradual Victory: He is continual-
ly doing something *Towards* it:
Here he gaineth one Point, and
there another, and so in time he
finds

finds certain and kindly success, by thus taming his Nature, and bringing it to a ductile manageable Temper by degrees.

All this while I suppose him not to have arrived to the pitch of an over-grown Sinner, but to become to the ordinary Age of Manhood; when ones Lusts, though they are strong and impetuous, yet are not so Fixt, Obstinate, and Refractory, as crooked Old Age is apt to make them. Such an *Experienced* Wretch, whom the Pleasure, and perhaps the Profit likewise of many Years hath confirm'd in Wickedness, comes at last to be so hardned, that all Reasonings, Admonitions, Counsels, and Prayers are thrown away upon him, and make as little effectual impression upon his perverse Mind, as they would upon a Rock, or Adamant. The danger of coming to this sad pass, is a *stronger* Argu-

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ment still of the Necessity there is
to redeem ones time, by doing some-
thing *Daily* in order to Eternity; that
is, to mortifie some Lust or other
every day, and every day to live
more and more unto God. For
*when Lust hath conceived it bringeth
forth Sin, Jam. 1. 15.* and Sin is
finish'd by degrees, by growing,
and gathering strength daily. And
by this means the Devil insensibly
prepares a way to that sad State,
which Divines call *Final Impenitence*;
meaning such a Numbness, Stupi-
dity, and Deadness of Heart, as
doth utterly indispose it for a true
Godly Repentance. 'Tis to be fear-
ed, that Men often come to this
wretched State by the just Judge-
ment of God upon them; for their
irreligious lives, and for their ob-
stinately putting off the Reso-
mation of them from *Day to Day*.
The truth is, it naturally follow-
eth such a wicked Course: For
Use

Use and *Custom* do naturally serve to harden the Heart, as was observed before: So that when the Hoary Head comes, it is as hard a matter to renew that old wicked Mind in it, as it is to renew ones Age. Nature is of it self inclined to Evil; and when a long trade of Wickedness hath brought the Mind to be in love with it, to be devoted to it, to be bent, set, and fixt upon it, it must needs be morally impossible to pluck up those Men's Habits quite by the Roots, which have been so many Years a contracting, and which have grown so strong and deep into the very Heart. So that though we should suppose an old Villain to have the same means and measures of Grace which are afforded the *Vain* Youth, that perhaps is guilty of the same Sins too; yet the case of the former would be far more desperate than the condition of the latter, were there nothing

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else to be considered but this, be-
cause the one hath been much more
Used and Accustomed to Wickedness
than the other.

But besides this, it must be said,
that the Hopes concerning both are
not the same. For the more time
Men waste in an Evil Course, the
less they have of God's Spirit; and
by this means also the stiffer and
harder are their Hearts, and the
more they Sin away their Day of
Grace. Without Christ we can
do nothing, *Jo. 15. 5. For it is God*
which worketh in us, both to will, and
to do, of his good Pleasure, Phil. 2.
13. The Strength we have, is from
above; the Power which serves to
prepare and assist our Souls, and
which doth every way enable us to
work out our Salvation, it is freely
given by the Father of Spirits.
Now though God giveth freely un-
to all, and to every Man such a por-
tion

tion of his Grace as is necessary and
suitable; yet they that are negligent,
and ill Husbands of their Talents,
do impair their Stock daily: By re-
sisting the Holy Ghost, they take a
Course to *grieve* him; and by con-
tinuing to *grieve*, they proceed at
length to quench him. Where Gods
Grace is abus'd or slighted, there
he withdraws it, in Vengeance for
that Wilfulness and Hardness which
was antecedent: And then is God
said, to give People up to their own
Hearts Lusts; to let them walk in
their own Counsels, *Psal. 81. 12.*
to send them strong Delusions, so
that they believe a Lie, *2 Thess. 2.*
11. to give them up to vile Affec-
tions, and to give them over to a re-
probate Mind, *Rom. 1. 26. 28.*
The Meaning of these Expressions
is, That God doth sometimes take
away from Men the Grace they
had; that he quite leaves them to
themselves, and delivers them up

to the saddest state of Mind; thereby punishing them most justly for the long Incurribleness of their Temper. By this means 'tis ~~im~~possible for them to play and sin away all the accepted Time before they are aware, and to bring themselves under an irreversible Sentence of Damnation in this their Life-time. It is *possible*, I say; and 'tis to be fear'd many actually *do* so, by persisting and going on in a Trade of Wickedness from Year to Year. I answer, 'tis a just *Provocation* for God to deal by them, as he did by *Pharaoh*, whom he gave utterly over to an obdurate state for his Stubborness and Obstinacy, especially after the Sixth Plague. And though he did not presently cut him off, but suffer'd him to live still some time longer; yet this was not in expectation of Repentance from him, being now brought by his own Wilfulness to a deserted

Con-

Condition ; but it was to this end, that he might be made at last a signal and astonishing Example of Divine Vengeance. From which Instance it is clear, that a Man may sin away his Time, and the Grace of God, till he comes to an Incapacity of repenting in good earnest ; and that he may do this before he dies.

And this is one Reason, why the best Divines are so severe against that which they call a *Late Repentance* ; meaning, Remorse of Conscience, and Sorrow for Sin, which is not *begun* till old Age, or Sickness comes, and the Terrors of Death with it. For though it be granted, that God pardons every True Penitent, whenever he turns to God with all his Heart and Soul : Yet the great Question is, Whether a late Repentance be True, Right, and such as the Gospel requires ?

that is, Whether it be indeed a True Change, and Renovation of the Mind? For there may be a Sorrow, and often is a real and passionate Sorrow that proceeds, not from an Hatred of Sin, but meerly from a Fear of Hell.

This is clear from the Practice of many Ungodly and Unrighteous Hypocrites, who in time of sudden and dangerous Sicknes sighed and groan'd, have been restless and in an Agony, sent in all haste for a Confessor, call'd for Prayers, and express'd such Griefs, Vows, Promises, and Resolutions of Amendment, as if they were as right Penitents, as that dying Thief was upon his Cross; and yet upon the Recovery of their Health, have dropt the Memory of all these Saint-like Professions, left all their Vows behind them in their Chambers, taken up again their former Courses,

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returned like Dogs to the Vomit they had cast up, to the same Riot, Rapine, Injustice and Malice which they Acted before. This is a Sign, that all that while the Love of Sin lay lurking and close in their Breasts, unrenounc'd, unmolested; and that all the Bitterness of their Souls came only from the Fear of Damnation; a Passion, somewhat like that of Criminals, when they are going to be Hang'd, and yet, if they had Liberty, would be as dishonest as ever under the very Gibbet. Now for Wicked Men to be in a Fright, when they think themselves a Dying, is no wonder at all, especially if their Consciences be awake. And if Fear and Sorrow be all, it is as good as nothing, though it be hearty and passionate. For the Devil is a Devil still, tho' he believes and trembles; and perhaps those Agitations of Mind are no better than *his*, wherewith wicked Men are ruff-

ruffled on their Sick Beds, especially after a long Life, a continual Course, a constant Trade of Impiety and Unrighteousness. For how is it probable, that so many old beloved Vices can be quite cast off on a sudden? That so many fixt Habits can be eradicated in the twinkling of an Eye? Or that the whole Bent and Temper of the Heart can in a Moment be changed so, as to be Diametrically opposite to what it was just before the Physician was sent for? No; it is far more probable, that it was not only the sight of Hell that scared the Wretch, and threw him into Pangs; and so any Man may be troubled, terrified and tormented, though God had forsaken him; because Self-preservation is an inseparable Principle of *Nature*.

The Result and Summ of this whole Argument is this; That to redeem ones Time to very good pur-

purpose, it is an excellent way to be bettering ones Spiritual State *every Day* in some respect and proportion. For the Work a Man hath to do is great and difficult, and that which requires every Day's Care and Diligence of him; especially if Evil Customs have got the Start, and are before-hand with him. Nature *alone* is hard to be rectified; and a constant Tenor of Diligence is necessary to transform it so, as to make it represent the Divine Nature. But when Evil *Habits* are to be contended and grapled with *too*, every Day's Resolution and Activity is little enough to conquer them as they should be conquer'd, that Faith and Vertue may carry the day, and triumph over them. Either they must be daily resisted, or most certainly they will get Ground of us daily. And what Peoples Negligence will turn to at last, in Old Age, or upon a Death-Bed, God alone

none knoweth infallibly. 'Tis not likely a Man should be able to destroy that at his last Hour, or in the time of Weakness, which he suffer'd to gather and grow to a great Head in the Day of Health and Vigour. More likely it is, that God will punish such Negligence with utter Dereliction and Hardness of Heart; against which no sufficient or sure Provision can be made, but by hearkning to his Voice, while it is called *to Day*.

Remember therefore the Advice even of those old Philosophers I spake of, who would have you resolve and fix upon a good Rule of Vertue, (and none can pretend to be so good, as what Jesus Christ hath given us all) and every Day examine your Consciences, what you have omitted, and what you have done; what Prayers you have offer'd up unto the Father of Lights; what

what Offices of Righteousness, Mercy and Goodness you have performed to Men; what Good you have done to your own Souls; what inordinate and irregular Desires you have cherish'd; what Lusts of the Flesh you have mortified; what Passions you have commanded and subdued; how low you have brought every lofty Imagination; how far you have put away all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking, with all Malice; wherein ye have imitated the Life of our Lord Jesus, who sacrificed His for you; and to what Degrees you have perfected your Nature unto a Similitude of the adorable Perfections of the everblest God, whose great and tender Mercies are over all his Works. As true Honour doth consist, not in an empty Title, but in Generosity and Nobleness of Mind; so doth true Religion consist, not in formal Shows

Shows and Professions, but in those Divine Endowments of Soul, which make us approach near to the Glories of our Maker. And by taking your self thus to Account every Night, you will the better discern what you are to implore God's Pardon and Assistance for against the Day following; wherein you have been wanting; what Defects you are to make up; what is to be the principal Business of the next Day; what Graces you are to improve; what you are to practise, and what you are to avoid. In short; you will easily know how, and be easily able in deed to redeem your lost Time; because it will be *little*, if due Care and Diligence be used *every Day*. By this Method you may soon take an honest Account of your Actions; your Repentance will be renewed day by day, the Care you ought to have of your Immortal Soul will continually

ally abide with you, and rest upon your Mind; your Heart and Ways will be always under your *own* watchful Eye as well as God's; the assistances and comforts of Gods Spirit you will never be without; there will be no room for those vicious Habits, which bring others at last to a moral Impossibility of Repenting; 'twill be impossible for them ever to be fixt, or to take Root; hardly will an hour in any one Day be quite lost; I am sure, a long Tract of Time will be saved, which is utterly dropt and forgotten by those, who leave all to the sad After-reckonings of a Death-bed. The great Mischief then is, that 'tis out of their Power to recover their Losses, though their Hearts should earnestly desire it; so many Months and Years are impossible to be recalled; and all this Calamity comes from the want of some Diligence every Day; 'tis Men's great Negligence

gence as to this Particular, that postpones the whole Business of their Salvation, and hinders that assiduous Progress and Proficiency, whereby otherwise they might have grown in Grace unto a perfect Man, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ.

CHAPTER IX.

V. and **A** Nother Effectual Way
 Lastly. **A** of Redeeming our
 Time, is, *To spend as much, as may
 be, of the remainder of it upon Devoc-
 tion, especially upon the Solemnities of
 Publick Devotion in the House of God.*
*A Day in thy Courts is better than a
 thousand,* saith the devout Psalmist,
Psal. 84. 10. It is better spent, and
 will turn to better Account, than
 all the Years that Vice and Vani-
 ties

ties consume. To withdraw our selves from the World: to take away, as it were by Reprisal, that Time which the World usually steals from us; to Dedicate, Offer up, Appropriate that Time to God and to bestow it upon God: This is such a plain way to recover our lost Hours, as is obvious to all who have a true Sense of Religion. But because there are many Duties which we own in the Theory to be Good, and yet are wanting to in the point of Practise, to encourage our Endeavours as to this Particular, Two things require our serious Consideration.

I. First, That to attend diligently upon the Ordinances and Institutions of our Religion, is an excellent way for us to do the Great Work for which the redeeming of our best Time is *prescrib'd* and *intended*.

II. Secondly,

II Secondly, That it is a ready way to keep us from losing our time for the *Future*.

I. First, to attend diligently upon the Ordinances and Institutions of our Religion, is an excellent way for us to do that great Work, for which the Redeeming of our *Lost* time is prescribed and *Intended*.

By the Ordinances of our Religion I mean, the Listening to and Meditating upon the Word of God; the use of the holy Sacrament; and the lifting up of our Hearts in Prayers and Thanksgivings, and the like. And by the great Work we are to do, I understand, the preparing and fitting our Souls for a Blessed Eternity. Now for the effectual doing of this, nothing serveth as a more proper and direct means, than diligent attendance upon those Religious Offices.

For it is by the constant use of these Ordinances, that the Spirit of God is ministred unto us, and worketh in us, that our Lusts are gradually mortified; that our Hearts are transform'd and changed as God would have them; that the Virtues which are necessary to qualifie us for an heavenly State, are confirm'd and increased in us; and that we grow in Grace, and in the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. To illustrate this Matter particularly.

Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God, Rom. 10. 17. Whether this Word be Preach'd or Read, it is an instrument of Grace to all, whose Hearts are open to receive and obey it. Therein the most precious Promises are exhibited, and the most terrible Threats denounced against all Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men; especially against such as hold
the

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the Truth in unrighteousness. There-
in all those *Doctrines* are contained,
which are according unto Godliness;
the whole Counsel of God is declar-
ed; and all those Things revealed,
which are profitable for instruction
in Righteousness, that every Man
may be perfect, thoroughly furnish-
ed unto all good Works. Therein are
given those divine *Laws*, which are
apt to renew our Minds, and to
cleanse us from all filthiness of Flesh
and Spirit, that we may perfect Ho-
liness in the fear of God: Therein
also we see a great Cloud of *Witnes-
ses*, who by their Exemplary Lives
have taught us to lay aside every
weight, and the Sin that doth so
easily beset us, and to run with pa-
tience the Race that is set before us.
Above all, therein we behold the
Example of the Lord Jesus, whose
most holy Life was intended for a
Pattern unto us, that we should fol-
low his steps; and whose ignomini-
ous

ous and most painful Death was intended partly to *Frighten* us from Sin, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purifie to himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works. All these things we find in the Scriptures; and by these means the Scriptures, if duly considered and meditated upon, are of vast use to us, and serve to produce in us Faith, Hope, Charity, and all manner of Righteousness and true Holiness. Upon which account it must needs be a very necessary and profitable way of Redeeming our Time, to bestow as much of it as we can upon Learning, Hearing, Reading, and inwardly digesting the good word of God, which is thus able in all respects to save our Souls.

In likemanner, the frequent *Participation* of Christ's Body and Blood is a vast help towards those Spiritual im-

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improvements, which should take
up the greatest part of our time. For
as that heavenly Ordinance puts us
in mind of God's Righteousness and
Mercy, which shined so bright in
the complicated Mystery of our Re-
demption; so it serves to raise our
Hearts into the highest Admirations
of God; and stirs us up to stand in
awe of his Justice; to rely upon his
Compassions; to express all possible
Gratitude for Mercies so undeserved,
so stupendious; to submit with all
Humility to his Commands and Pro-
vidence; to shew the Sense we have
of his great Goodness by suitable re-
turns of Affection; and to love one
another, because God hath so loved
us all. In short, by preparing our
selves duly for the Blessed Sacrament,
and by a Reverent and Religious
use of it, our Faith becomes the
stronger, our Hopes the more vigo-
rous; our Charity the more Ar-
dent; our Minds the more Circum-
spect;

spect; our Care and Caution the more strict; and all the ordinary Gifts and Graces of God's Spirit are thereby the more Exercised, Confirmed, and increased in us.

This shews, what an admirable way of Redeeming our lost time this is, to attend diligently upon the Institutions of our Religion, because the great work we are to do, in order to a blessed Eternity, and to fit us for it, is thereby carried on with constant Dispatch, and with the quicker Hand. But we should consider moreover how profitably we may imploy our time, and recover in some measure what is lost, by daily setting aside some part and portion of the time we have for the *Ordinance of Prayer alone*; even when we are not Communicants at the Altar, nor hearers of the Word after the most solemn manner. *Every day will I bless thee*, saith the Psalmist,

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Pf.

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Pf. 145. 2. And indeed the thing is grounded upon an eternal Law of Reason: For we stand in *Need* of his Goodness, and *Receive* of his Goodness daily; and therefore it is necessary and equal, that we should address our selves to him daily, with Supplications and Thanksgivings. Now if we should do this (I mean, do it with such devout Hearts as ought to be applied to so sublime a Duty) besides the advantage we get by attending Weekly and Monthly upon other Ordinances, our daily attendance upon *This*, would be of infinite use to us. For hereby we do not only fit and prepare our Souls for an heavenly State, but are indeed a *Doing* the works of Heaven; actually fix'd upon them, already imploy'd and *Engaged* in those Exercises, which are the Life of Angels, and of the Spirits of Just Men made Perfect. To admire, and adore, and love; and praise

praise God, is the everlasting business of the Blessed above: And this we do here below, though not in that intense Degree, when we worship him in Truth, and in the Beauty of Holiness; when we prostrate our selves before him, under a profound and awful Sense of his super-excellent Majesty; when our Minds are fix'd upon him, as the Glorious and Ravishing Object of our Contemplations; when the Faculties of our Souls are acting vigorously upon him; when we Exalt and Magnifie him in our Hearts; when our Desires stream out after him, as the only Good we long for; when our Thoughts are full of rapturous Ideas of his Perfections; when we celebrate and set him forth, as the greatest, wisest, and best of all Beings; when our Hearts are inflamed with the Love of him; and when we offer up our Prayers and Praise, to him with Affections as high

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as Heaven, and as large as the
Universe.

And can any time be better, or so
well spent, as that which is thus
employ'd? This is to Redeem ones
Time to the best purpose; and in
some Sense to live it over again, by
following the great Work of ones
whole life close, and so by living
much in a little: And the design
of this Consideration is, to stir you
up to the Love and Practice of De-
votion; as a proper way of making
your Life up, whereinsoever you
may have been hitherto defective.
To recover what hath been mis-
spent, and to fit your self for God
and Heaven, without frequent Acts
of Piety, is impossible: Rather it
is a way to lose on, and spend amiss
still, and to make your Condition
every day worse and worse. And
this one great Reason, that there
are so many Evil People in the
World,

World, because they neglect a Course of Devotion, which, if diligently and rightly followed, could not chuse but make them better.

I do not mean, that every one is a Saint that resort to the Church, or that the repeating of so many good Prayers is enough to dispose and qualifie People for Eternal Happiness. No, there are some that content themselves with the bare performance of the outward Work; and there are others, that go to the Temple rather in compliance with a Custom, or out of Compliment and Civility to the Laws, than for Conscience sake towards God. But this is my meaning, that when Men apply their Souls to the use of God's Ordinances, as a necessary Duty, and seriously *intend* to do themselves good by the use of them, and go about it with Sincerity of *Mind*, and Exercise themselves in

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it with attentive *Zeal*, and with
Humble, Fervent and Devout Spi-
rits; when their hearts are thus
Honestly dispos'd, they take such a
ready Course to fit themselves for
Heaven, as God will be sure to
Bless and Prosper with success, if
they persevere unto the end in so
doing. They are then in God's
way, and in the way of the Holy
Spirit, to enlighten their Understan-
dings, to guide them into the Truth,
to renew their Minds, to sancti-
fie their Affections, to direct their
Wills, to improve and perfect their
Natures, and to assist and strengthen
them unto every good work. And
by this means, as they obtain pardon
for their past Miscarriages, so they
gradually retrieve their former Los-
ses, and make the time past their
own again, by their extraordinary
Husbandry of the remainder, and
by filling up an *Hiatus* with a pro-
portionable Supplement.

2. Secondly,

2. Secondly, As the diligent attendance upon God's Ordinances helps us to redeem the time that is *Gone*; so it serves to keep us from *Losing* more for the *Future*. We may reckon that time to be *Lost*, which is spent either after a *Wicked*, or after a *Vain* manner: That is, when the Conscience contracteth some great Guilt in the spending of it, or when the Man gets no solid Benefit or Satisfaction by it, though strictly speaking we cannot affirm, it is sinned away; and in both these respects we shall see, that a course of Devotion secures us from being any considerable Losers.

1. First, That time is to be accounted *Lost*, which is spent in *Wickedness*. When Vice takes it up, so much of our Life is gone to our eternal Prejudice and Hurt, unless the Wickedness be retracted, a

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Man doth what he can to undo his Actions, and to unlive his former Life; and so begins, as it were, his days again. To be sure he himself reckons so much of ~~of~~ his time quite thrown away; is willing to raise it out of his own Memory; and heartily wisheth, that the just Judge of all the Earth would forget it too, and never impute or account it unto him. Now People that are ever mindful of their Devotions, are not in danger of losing their time *This way*; because they are assured, that if they *regard Iniquity in their own Hearts, the Lord will not hear them.* Psal. 66. 18. Nay, that their *Sacrifice will be an Abomination,* Prov. 15. 8. Upon which account 'tis morally impossible for them to Sin and Pray too. lest instead of Mercies they should draw down a Thunderbolt, and instead of *Bread* should receive a *Stone*, or a *Scorpion*. They who have a sense of God, ~~who~~ must needs

needs be shie of offering up such Prayers, as are enough to put them out of Countenance, and out of Hope too ; such Prayers as they know will Recoil upon them ; and not only fly in their faces, but terrifie and gall their very Consciences also ; But in truth, we cannot suppose Men of Pious Minds to spend their precious Time to such bad purposes as these ; because the Notions they have of God's Majesty, of his Omnipresence and Omniscience, of his Justice, Holiness, and the like, are a continual check upon them, to govern their natural Inclinations, and to restrain them from those evil Courses, into which others run without Fear or Wit, *as the Horse rusheth into the Battle,* as the Prophet speaks, *Jer. 8. 6.* Besides, as they have not the *Heart*, or *Face* to Sin, so neither have they those *Temptations* and *Opportunities*, which the Devil Minist:eth daily

to those, who are such *Strangers* to the Throne of Grace, as if they lived *Without* God in the World. Such Men are never out of the Devil's road; and therefore it is no wonder if Vice be the trade they bestow their Time upon; no wonder, if a Luxurious Table, or a *Dalilah's* Lap, or a Drunken Society, or Prophane Discourse, or the study of Mischief, or the Drudgery of Covetousness, or the Pride of Life taketh up those Hours, which God hath a right to. Ungodly Principles and Contempt of things Sacred do always betray Men to some wickedness or other; nor cannot be but Irreligion and Vice must go together; so that 'mongst other Arguments that might be heaped up to encourage us to a life of Devotion, this is one, that it is an excellent *Security* and *Preservative* against Sin, and keeps us out of Harms-way: *Blessed is the Man*, saith David,

David, that walketh not in the Counsel of the Ungodly, nor standeth in the way of Sinners, nor sitteth in the Seat of the Scornful, Ps. 1. 1. This is the Felicity of the devout Man in particular; whose Affections being set upon the things above, he has not so much time to spare from Prayer and Contemplation, as the Children of this World fling away upon their Lusts; nor doth Temptation or ill Company seduce him into the ways of Death. The Angels of God are his guard to keep him in all his ways. Solitude, which is to some a *Snare*, is to him an opportunity for *Grave* and *Holy Meditations*. This House of God is a *Sanctuary* to him from his own *Evil Self*; a place of refuge from his corrupt Heart; the very *Thoughts* whereof he there keeps in order, by minding the several Duties of the Place, and by the reverend Apprehensions he hath of that infinite Being, who is the *Searcher of Hearts*,

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Hearts, and by this means he clears
and rids his Soul of those vagrant
Imaginations, which otherwise
would disturb and annoy his Heart,
as *Abraham* drove away the *Fowls*,
when he offer'd to God *His* Sacri-
fice. *Gen. 15. 11.*

Thus, to attend diligently upon
the Ordinances and Institutions of
our Religion, keeps us from losing
more of our Time in the *First* re-
spect; from squandering it away
upon that which is *Evil*; nay, from
laying any part of it out upon the
Principles, the *Occasions*, the *Oppor-
tunities* of *Evil*. And the use we
should make of it is, that of that
little Time God allots us in this
World, we should set what we can
apart for religious Offices. The
Scripture calls it, *Praying without
Ceasing*, 1 *Thess. 5. 17. Continuing
in Prayer, and watching in the same
with Thanksgiving*, *Col. 4, 2. Pray-
ing*

ing always with all Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all Perseverance, Ephes. 6, 18. And continuing instant in Prayer, Rom. 12. 12. By which Expressions is meant, not that we should be praying every *Minute* of the Day (for other Works of Necessity and Charity are to be attended on also) but that we should not let slip any convenient *Opportunity* of Devotion, nor play away those hours which are *Proper* for it; but with all possible diligence and application of Mind observe those times of Prayer which are stated and Fixed, either by publick Authority, or by our own private, voluntary choice; so that our whole time may turn to very good account.

2. Secondly, By this means we shall be sure not to spend our Time *Vainly* neither; which is *another* way of losing it; that is, when a
Man

Man gets no solid *Benefit* and *Satisfaction* by it, though strictly speaking we cannot affirm, that he *Sin-
neth* it away, or lays it out upon Vice and Wickedness. Man being a rational Creature, endued with Understanding, on purpose that he might deliberately Act in order to Ends, that besit and become the Dignity of his Nature; all that time is to be reckon'd *Lost* to him, which doth not serve in some measure to *Answer* such Ends. To gratifie the Senses is the Life of a Beast; and it becomes a Beast well enough; because a Beast hath no higher, or nobler Faculties than Sense. But in *Man*, Reason hath the Superiority; or a Faculty of distinguishing between that which is morally Good, or morally Evil; and a power of discoursing and judging touching the *Nature* of his Actions; what they *Deserve*, and what may be the *Rewards* of them. To Act like-

a *Man* therefore, is to live according to *Reason*; or, as it becomes a Creature, that hath the Rules of Vertue and Religion before him; and as long as he Acteth according to those Rules, *besides* the Rewards he Entitles himself to in another World hereafter, he doth himself great good in this Life, and receives that *Pleasure* and *Satisfaction* of mind, which is an unspeakable Reward at present. Now of all these Acts of a Rational Soul, *Devotion*, or the Contemplating and Worshipping of God, brings with it the *Highest* Pleasure; and therefore the Time that is bestow'd upon it, must needs be of the very best account.

The truth of this is, such as Worship God with all their Hearts, find by daily Experience the great Pleasures that go along with their *Acts* of Worship; the relish and satisfaction they leave *behind* upon the Soul,

Soul, when the Solemnity is *over* ; the Delights which *still* accompany the Mind ; and the wonderful Comfort and Complacency wherewith the Day is *Concluded* ; these *Present* Rewards shew, that they have well employed and husbanded their time. And when a Man comes at last to cast up his Actions upon his Death-Bed, and to take a true Inventory of them, most certainly nothing then can speak greater Peace, or minister greater Joy to his departing Soul, than if he be able to give this Testimony of himself, that amidst all the Contingencies, Vanities, Allurements, and Fatigues of the World, he hath made his *Life* an *Offering* to his Maker.

This we should consider in *Time*, and while it is yet called, *To Day*. It becomes Creatures endued with Reason, and enlightned with Revelation also, to *Forecast* Events throughly,

thoroughly, and to provide such things *Before-hand*, as will stand us in good stead, and be of substantial use and comfort to us all along; of which this must needs be one of the greatest and most considerable; *viz.* A continued *Course* of Piety and Religion.

And what have they to compare with this, who, though they be not *Vicious*, yet are very *Vain* Persons, *Whiffling* away their hours in Pageantry and Impertinencies; not as if they were reasonable Beings, able and obliged to prosecute the noblest Ends; but rather little Puppets and Figures of Men, brought into the World, just to take a few insignificant turns in it, and to make a shew? Such are those, who know not, or think not how to rid away their time, but by formal Entertainments, by Mirth and Rallery, by Ceremony and Courtship,
by

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by idle Visits, by Finicalness in
Dressing, by Sports and Gaming;
in short, by an unaccountable va-
riety of un-man-like ways of spend-
ing and passing away ones Life. I
suppose such People not formally
to *sin*, but foolishly to *Trifle* away
their Minutes, which is the softest
and most innocent Construction
that can be made of it. Now tho'
by these mean and childish Methods
no such Guilt is contracted, as is
by down-right Villany and Debau-
cheries; yet this is enough to ren-
der them contemptible, that they
bring a Man no solid advantage or
satisfaction, and therefore are to be
reckoned so many lost Expences.
The pleasure of them is like an In-
fant's *Dream*, which is only the pre-
sent Operation of Fancy, that gives
him a Minutes Smile. The Soul is
never awhit the *wiser*, or *better* for
them; but the *worse* rather, by be-
ing degraded from its Dignity,
and

and contumeliously put with all its noble Faculties, to use that are silly and reproachful. All that can be said of it is, that by the help of these mean and trifling ways, so much time is gone: The Fool's Fingers are eas'd of it; which will be so far from being a comfort to him, that when Sickness and Death shall come, it will be excessive Bitterness to consider, how well so many Hours might have been employed, by working out his Salvation in the Church, and in the Closet.

To conclude all: The design of this *whole* Discourse is, to shew, how much it is our Duty, our Interest, and our Wisdom, to make a good use of our Time; and what Course is proper for us to take, that it may turn to very good account; to our *Present*, and *Future* advantage.

And

And would God we would be perswaded to consider seriously, what an *Important* thing this is! the main business indeed we should be mindful of in this Life; because it is the *Measure* of our Lives; and when Death comes, 'twill be equally as impossible to recal the *One*, as it will be again, to live over the *Other*.

We use to call *Time*, the most *Precious* thing in the World; and use to *Think* it such, when Matters of great *Consequence* require quick dispatch; in that case, a *Day*, an *Hour*, a *Minute* is thought too valuable to be neglected; lest the Loss, though but of one *Moment*, at once defeat the Hopes, and spoil all the Labours of an whole *Year*. So that the Improvidence of many People is astonishing and unaccountable, that

that when their very *Souls* lie at stake, and Hell and Damnation is *before* them, they should then only be *most* careless of their Time, tho' the Case be of the *Greatest* Concernment, and the Hazards they run, be the *most Fatal*, and the Loss that follows will *most* certainly be *utterly Irreparable* to all *Eternity*.

But the truth is, Time is *One* of those *Many* Blessings, which Men never so *Prize*, as when they *Want* them. The *Sad* Reflexions of a *Death-Bed*; the *Weeping, Wailing, and Gnashing of Teeth* beyond it, do plainly argue, that nothing can be more *Worth* recalling, than Time; and nothing more *Worth* our husbanding, than the *Present* time; because when once gone, it is *Never* to be recall'd.

That

That there may be no room for such *Late* Sorrows, I have laid before you the most necessary, and profitable Rules I can think of, how you may employ that time, which is now in your *Hands*; and in a *Moral* sense redeem too what is *slit Away*; as, by Industrious Resolutions; by an active and vigorous Repentance; by an operative and universal Charity; by caution and watchfulness every remaining day of your Life; and more especially by devoting all the time you can to the Service and Worship of God; which of the several Particulars hath taken up the greatest share of my Meditations, because it is the Employment of Heaven it self, and that which justly claimeth all possible Portions of our time here.

By

By the diligent performance of these things we may so redeem our Time, as to make a great deal of a few Days; and do that in one Third of one's Life, which some hardly do in their whole Age, though it be a *long* one; and then is a Man's Life to good purpose. For 'tis not how *long*, but how *well* a Man lives, which God considers; nor is it his *Years*, but his *Works*, that will be regarded in God's Day. In short: He that exerts all the Faculties and Powers of his Soul in a Course of Virtue, and to the utmost of his Abilities endeavours to rectifie what hath been amiss: He that doth all the Good he can in his Generation, and spends not a Day without setting forward in some measure his own and other Men's Salvation; He that gives himself to God's Service, and continually makes an Oblation
of

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of his Heart, and Incense of his
Prayers: *He* it is that *Redeems* his
Time indeed; so that be it longer
or shorter, as God shall see it best
for him, however he *Began*, he
shall *Finish* his Course well: And
as *Eliphaz* said, *Job. 5. 26.* He shall
come to his Grave in a full Age, like
as a Shock of Corn cometh in, in his
season.

Morning

Morning Prayers.

O Lord, teach us so to number
our Days, that we may apply
our Hearts unto Wisdom. *Amen.*

O Lord, save us thy Servants,
who put our whole Trust in
Thee. Send us Help from thy Ho-
ly Place, and evermore mightily
defend us. Let the Enemy have
no Advantage of us, nor the Wick-
ed approach to us. But be unto us
a Strong Tower from the Face of
all our Enemies. *Amen.*

H

O Lord

O Lord our Heavenly Father, Almighty and Everlasting God, who hast safely brought us to the Beginning of this Day, defend us in the same with thy mighty Power, and grant, that this Day we fall into no Sin, neither run into any kind of Danger; but that all our Doings may be ordered by thy Governance, to do always that is righteous in thy Sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

O God, who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great Dangers, that, by reason of the Frailty of our Nature, we cannot always stand upright; grant to us such Strength and Protection, as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all Temptations, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* Al-

A Lmighty God, who seest that we have no Power of our selves to help our selves, keep us, both outwardly in our Bodies, and inwardly in our Souls; that we may be defended from all Adversities which may happen to the Body, and from all Evil Thoughts which may assault and hurt the Soul, through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A Lmighty God, who hast given thine only Son to be unto us both a Sacrifice for Sin, and also an Ensam ple of Godly Life: Give us Grace, that we may always most thankfully receive that his inestimable Benefit, and also daily endeavour our selves to follow the blessed Steps of his most Holy Life, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

O Almighty God, who alone canst order the Unfuly Wills and Affections of sinful Men; Grant unto thy People, that they may love the things which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold Changes of the World, our Hearts may surely there be fixt, where True Joys are to be found, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

O God, the Protector of all them that trust in thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, increase and multiply upon us thy Mercy; that Thou being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things Temporal, that we finally lose not the things Eternal. Grant this, O Heav-
venly

Morning Prayer.

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venly Father, for Jesus Christ's
fake our Lord. *Amen.*

Lord of all Power and Might,
who art the Author and Gi-
ver of all Good Things; graft in
our Hearts the Love of thy Name;
increase in us True Religion, nou-
rish us with all Goodness, and of
thy great Mercy keep us in the
same, through Jesus Christ our
Lord. *Amen.*

UNto thy Gracious Mercy and
Protection, O God, we com-
mit our selves. The Lord bless us,
and keep us. The Lord make his
Face to shine upon us, and be gra-
cious unto us. The Lord lift up
his Countenance upon us, and give
us Peace both now and evermore.
Amen.

*Our Father which art in Heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name, &c.*

Evening

Evening Prayers.

A Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, Judge of all Men; we acknowledge and bewail our manifold Sins and Wickedness, which we from time to time most grievously have committed, by Thought Word and Deed, against thy Divine Majesty, provoking most justly thy Wrath and Indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our Misdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous unto us, the Burthen of them is intolerable. Have mercy

mercy upon us, have mercy upon us, most merciful Father; for thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, forgive us all that is past, and grant, that we may ever hereafter serve and please Thee in Newness of Life, to the Honour and Glory of thy Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Lighten our Darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord, and by thy great Mercy defend us from all Perils and Dangers of this Night, for the Love of thy only Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

O Everlasting God, who hast ordained and constituted the Services of Angels and Men in a wonderful Order; mercifully grant, that as thy Holy Angels alway do thee Service in Heaven; so by thy Appoint-

Appointment they may succour and defend us on Earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

GRant, O Lord, that as we are Baptized into the Death of of thy Blessed Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. So by continual mortifying our corrupt Affections, we may be buried with him, and that through the Grave and Gate of Death we may pass to our joyful Resurrection for his Merits, who Died and was Buried, and Rose again for us, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

ALmighty and Everlasting God, who art always more ready to hear, than we to pray, and are wont to give more than either we desire or deserve; pour down upon us the Abundance of thy Mercy;
for-

forgiving us those things whereof
our Conscience is afraid, and giving
us those good things which we are
not worthy to ask, but through
the Merits and Meditation of Jesus
Christ thy Son our Lord. *Amen.*

*Our Father which art in Heaven,
&c.*

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